

SOCCER

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GST INCLUSIVE

AFKOS KEANE FOR SOCCEROOS IN PERTH

By Richard Kreider

Recent World Cup finalists the Republic of Ireland have been pencilled in as possible opponents for the Socceroos in a match to be played at the recently overhauled Western Australian Cricket Association ground in March - that's if newly-appointed Soccer Australia director and International Program committee-man Paul Afkos gets his way.

The last and only the second time a true senior international was played in Perth, happened in June 1995, when Australia took on Ghana, again at the WACA.

Speaking as a guest at the launch of the Perth BGC Construction Lightning Cup Night Series for local State League clubs last week, the Western Australian representative said he was especially keen to have a Socceroos game in Perth and both Ireland or Uruguay; the team that knocked Australia out of the 2002 World Cup Qualifiers, could well be on the cards.

"Under the chairmanship of Les Avory, the International Program sub-committee has also been discussing the prospects of getting Yugoslavia and/or Argentina in

June. Depending on contractual acceptance obviously determines who will actually be playing here," said Afkos, who was equally eager for the west to host an Under-20 tournament with Australia, Korea, Japan and China.

Already assured is the much-anticipated England - Socceroos clash in London next month and the under-20 World Cup in the Middle-East.

Apart from the obvious revenge factor for a game against the South Americans, a match-up versus the Irish would be a far more mouth-watering proposition, if not for the enormous Irish support it will entice alone.

Under caretaker coach Don Givens, the likes of Robbie Keane of Tottenham Hotspurs, World Cup sensation Damien Duff (Blackburn Rovers midfielder), goalkeeper Shay Given (Newcastle United) and Leeds United defender Gary Kelly, should guarantee promoters a sell-out crowd without them even trying. Then there is Manchester United's Roy Keane, who, if he is not injured, may have a change of heart about having quit the national team and want to atone for his misdemeanours.

Meanwhile, Afkos also told the gathering at Inglewood United Soccer Club's premises, that Soccer Australia is close to finalising substantial sponsorships with German sports clothing giant Adidas and a reported \$8 million arrangement with Qantas; and out of the Qantas deal will apparently be a dividend that will flow on to the State Federations for the funding of their respective annual Talent Identification programmes.

"Dominic Galati has been working fantastically hard for securing the sponsor-

ship, said Afkos. "He has a hell of a lot of passion for the game."

Afkos, owner of Afkos Industries who built the temporary seating structure at Perth Oval, and whose family business is involved in a hotel being constructed in Kastoria, Greece in time for the 2004 Olympics, also declared that should Australia qualify for the 2006 World Cup, and with the new automatic qualification for the Oceania Region giving the country its greatest opportunity in decades, Qantas will give Soccer Australia a \$2.5million bonus.

Afkos, who is also on sub-committees for reviewing the NSL and the Soccer Australia administration, said that the success from playing in the World Cup would flow on down to the local National Soccer League competition.

"When Australia eventually performs well in the World Cup, the National League will be perceived differently."

He also hinted that the make-up of the eventual World Cup qualifying band of players might not be what most people will think it could be, saying there is a new crop of players coming through who will be competitive in time for the next World

Cup Finals.

Afkos' speech understandably made people take notice; especially the openness and apparent attempt at making the governing body more transparent. "I am committed and I would like to see Soccer Australia make good and positive progress from now on - and most importantly, to have all our national teams do well."

"Because when they do well, the perception of our game becomes a positive one." He was also delighted to reveal that since the Annual General Meeting of October 24th and amid prolonged cries of liquidation, the national governing body has made positive progress and will have announced at last Saturday's meeting that they are solvent.

When asked about his thoughts on a second NSL team from Perth, he didn't directly give his endorsement, but it was easy to see through the words of his response that he would more than likely support another WA team.

"The State Federation has to be a stakeholder, together with the State League and junior clubs and others," said Afkos on how a second team should be produced.

(Continued on Page 3)



Paul Afkos: Trying to bring an international showdown between Socceroos and Ireland to Western Australia.

RASIC IN — BLANCO OUT

By Peter Damalas

Former Socceroo assistant coach, Raul Blanco, has been sacked as coach of bottom club, Marconi Stallions. After sixteen rounds of the 2002-2003 National Soccer League season, the Bossley Park team were at the foot of the table with eleven points, and only three wins to their name.

The Argentinian born coach has had a long career in Australia, and has been involved with the national team in various capacities since 1981.

The board at Marconi made the decision last week after a 3-0 loss away to Adelaide City Force. Coaching great Rale Rasic gave Blanco the news in his role as football manager of the club. Rasic, who took Australia to their one and only World Cup appearance in West Germany in 1974, when he was 38, has taken over the coaching position of the senior team to complement his management role.

"I've never been a dreamer. I'm going to take the coaching job day by day," he said.

"Marconi is a big club with a big tradition. We are going through a difficult period, but like anybody else, we accept this and have to take the responsibility to rectify the situation. I am grateful to a man of the calibre of Raul Blanco, but we can't do much about the decision" he said.

Marconi president, Tony Campolongo, was adamant that the decision was made by the board with the club and the team in

mind.

With his experience in youth development, coaching the national under 23 team to the Olympic Games, Blanco was credited with the rise of youngsters Paul Cotte and Michael Thwaite, who have emerged from the youth team.

Rasic said that these two players, whom he expects will push for international selection, are a testament to Raul Blanco's coaching ability.

"He has dealt with the cream of Australian soccer for 20 years. You cannot deny the wonderful work he has done" Rasic said.

Blanco was confident that the team would turn it around this season.

"Obviously I feel a great deal of disap-



Rale Rasic: Can the former Socceroo coach dig the Stallions out of trouble this season?

pointment. We have only just started the Second Round of the competition and we suffered many injuries. It was difficult to assemble everyone into the team" he said.

"Marconi have a reasonably young squad, and the long term injuries have had an effect on our performance".

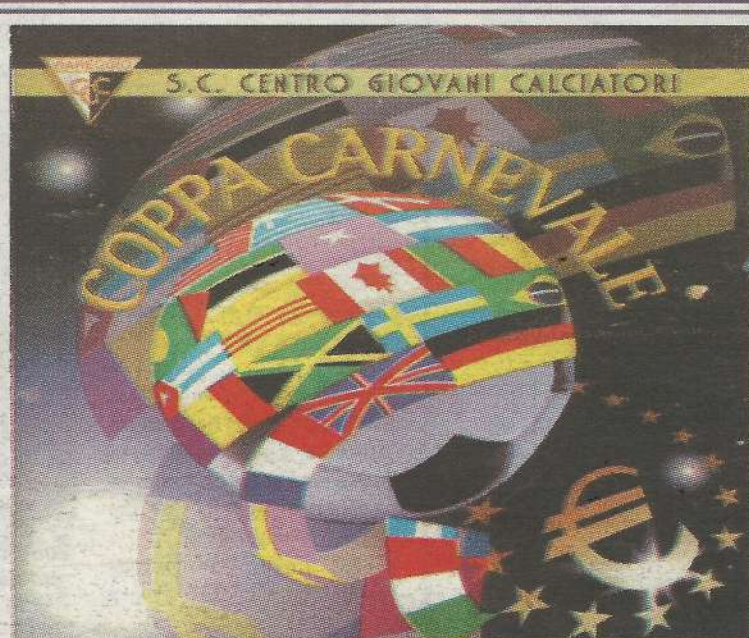
With the absence of key players Angelo Costanzo, Joe Spiteri, Christian Care, Kevo Gulessarian and Mark Babic at various stages of the season, the Stallions have struggled to field their first eleven.

The former coach highlighted these injuries as a determining factor behind the team's poor first half of the season. "These injuries have influenced the team in every way. It is important to play with a structure. We have very rarely played with each other and I said all along, that when we do regroup, we will be a good team" he said.

Blanco has not ruled out a return to coaching in the near future. The current caretaker coach said that the board have spoken about bringing in players to reinforce the depth of the squad when the transfer window opens on Wednesday. However, he stressed that nothing has been finalised as of yet.

Responding to questions about his age, Rasic cited the return of 71 year old Mario Zagallo, who has become new technical director of the Brazil national team. And with the return of coaching veteran Zoran Matic at Adelaide City in recent weeks, Rasic argued that age has little to do with performance.

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A.P.I.A.-
Leichhardt
Tigers Youth Team

Off to Viareggio Tournament

2003

(See Special P16-P17)



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With several of the European Leagues still in their winter recess, many of the Australians players usually committed to these have come back home for a bit of R & R.

As a result many have spoken to the Australian media of which AA have tracked down and included in this week's issue.

★★★★

Ajax goalkeeper Joe Didulica has admitted he'd welcome a move to Spain's Primera Liga.

The shot-stopper is off contract at the end of the season and as yet has not resigned with the Amsterdam club.

Didulica enjoyed arguably his best performance in an Ajax jersey earlier this season in a Champions League tie at Spanish champs Valencia and he is highly rated in La Liga circles.

Didulica told the Herald-Sun, "I'm out of contract in July and, as of January 1, I am free to sign with any club in the world."

"Ajax have already offered me a new two-year contract and I'm flattered. But I told them I want to concentrate on playing and I'm leaving negotiations to my manager."

"I've always loved Spanish football and I think they've got the best league in the world. It would be like playing Champions League every week."

"I do want to stay and I love Ajax because they've got me to where I am now in three-and-a-bit years. They've looked after me in every sense of the word and it would be a shame to leave, but I have to keep my options open."

★★★★

Basel's Aussie midfielder Scott Chipperfield seems destined to see out the season in Switzerland after his hopes of securing a transfer to the Premier League faded.

The former Wollongong Wolves star told The Sydney

Morning Herald that all remained silent on the transfer front during his holiday in Australia. "There's been lots of talk but nothing in writing," Chipperfield said before he jetted back to Europe from Sydney this week. "I'd love to play in England and if something comes up during the transfer window, that's great. But if it doesn't, it's not a worry either."

"As far as I know, I could get a work permit for England and I think the game there would suit my style."

Charlton looked odds on to capture the talented left-sided midfielder after manager Alan Curbishley was impressed with his performance against Manchester United in the Champions League while French side Marseille's bid fell well short of Basel's \$5.6million price tag. But it now seems that Leeds United is the only real contender left, although a swap move involving Birmingham's Socceros flyer Stan Lazaridis for Elland Road defender Michael Duberry would put an end to that speculation. Despite his dream to play in the Premier League, Chipperfield is content to keep doing his job for Basel.

"We've [Basel] got at least four more Champions League



Scott Chipperfield: Will see out the rest of the season with his club FC Basel.

matches and we're only one point off the top in the league," he said. "I've had a great time with Basel as well and we've got a lot to play for over the rest of the season."

★★★★

On the local front another talented youngster is on the verge of moving abroad.

Melbourne Knights fullback Daniel Vasilevski expects to sign with FC Midtjylland at the end of the month.

The Australia U20 international will move to Denmark for trials with the Danish club but is confident of a positive outcome.



Daniel Vasilevski: Confident of a move to FC Midtjylland.

Vasilevski told the Herald-Sun, "I've been offered a two-week trial with FC Midtjylland but they're pretty keen and it should be more than just a trial."

"They've seen me play a few games and I'm going with them on a training camp in Italy where they'll play a few games."

★★★★

Rushden & Diamonds boss Brian Talbot has moved for Birmingham City goalkeeper Clint Davies.

Talbot has targeted the talented Davies as a short-term replacement for injured keeper Adam Sollitt, who is recovering from a wrist injury.

Perth-born Davies, a candidate for the Australia U23 squad, will arrive at Nene Park on Wednesday in time to feature in the reserves' clash with Boston that day.

Talbot wants to see the youngster in action before seeking a loan deal with Birmingham boss Steve Bruce.

★★★★

Fairfield Bulls defender Arthur Diles is attracting attention from both Europe and Asia.

The 20 years old recently trialed at Belgian first division side Mechelen after Zlatko Arambasic recommended Diles to his old club.

He played three competition games with the reserve side but unfortunately the club went into liquidation and he was unable to pursue a deal.

"I've found the NSW Super League competition quite strong



Arthur Diles: Sparking interest from a number of overseas clubs.

here. My future goal is to go overseas and already things have appeared for me. I just want to play my best and hopefully reach my next goal, which is playing abroad like so many Australians are doing at the moment".

★★★★

The Football Association (FA) confirmed that the yellow card handed out to Blackburn's midfielder Lucas Neill during the English League Cup semi-final first leg match against Manchester United at Old Trafford would stand.

Neill was booked for diving by referee Uriah Rennie and now misses the return leg at Ewood Park on January 22 as he has collected five cautions this season.

Both Neill and Blackburn boss Graeme Souness pleaded with Rennie to change his mind but the FA said Thursday the referee stood by his decision in his official match report.

"The report confirms the yellow card shown to Lucas Neill during the game and makes no reference to any reviewing of the decision," said a statement on the FA's official website.

"As there is no formal right of appeal against a yellow card, the decision stands," the statement added.

Souness said of the incident where Neill went down in the box after being challenged by United's Mikael Silvestre. "It can't be a booking if they (the referee) look at it properly."

There is no formal appeal process regarding yellow cards. However, referees do have a 48-hour period following the game to reconsider any decisions.

However, unless the referee notifies the FA of any change, all yellow cards stand.

★★★★

Oldham Athletic have told planetfootball.com that have not received any contact from Premiership side Leeds United for their Australian goalkeeper Leslie Pogliacomi.

Pogliacomi has been in fine form at Boundary Park this season, helping manager Iain Dowie's side with their push for promotion from Division Two.

He has so far kept 14 clean sheets with The Latics so far this

season and reports suggest that Leeds were enquiring about the former Parramatta man. However, a spokesman for The Latics denied receiving any contact from the Elland Road club for the 26-year-old.

The spokesman said: "We've had no contact with Leeds whatsoever."

"We were surprised as he [Pogliacomi] was to read it in the paper."

"That's all I can say because we've had no contact." Pogliacomi had settled well to life in Division Two after joining the Boundary Park club in June of last year.



Les Pogliacomi: Any interest from Leeds United has been dismissed by his Oldham Athletic club

★★★★

Sportinglife.com report that leading scorer Jamie Cureton insists that he wants to sign a new contract with Reading, "but only if the terms are right." Initial talks between Reading and Cureton's agent have been unsuccessful.

"They made an offer but it's far short of what I want," said the diminutive Australian striker, signed from Bristol Rovers for £250,000 in August 2000.

Cureton's contract expires at the end of this season and it is unlikely there will be a shortage of clubs wanting to take advantage of his proven goalscoring record.



Jamie Cureton: The Reading star would like to sign a contract that will keep him at the club.

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AFKOS KEANE FOR SOCCEROOS IN PERTH

(Continued from front page)

"It's fair to say that the Western Australian soccer fraternity does not want to be a part-time spectator."

"It is however, disappointing to see Perth Glory distancing themselves from the grass-roots and State level in WA," said the former part-owner of the NSL club.

And with the WACA expressing a great desire to become involved in soccer now that the venue has been modified to better accommodate soccer, they could very well be the home of the second NSL team, especially if Perth Oval is not going to be used the week the Glory play away.

"The WACA has been remodelled to accommodate rectangular arena sports and I'm confident that it will now give players and patrons alike a nice experience," said the WACA secretary, Jeff

Havercroft. "We have had it designed for soccer, Rugby League and Union; and are hopeful these sports will soon give the WACA a trial," he said.

In reality, a second NSL team from the west could still be a long way off, especially now that Perth's trail-blazing club, the Glory are even finding funding hard to come by.

"You've got to ask if there is any current commercial reality in another WA team," said Glory CEO Jeff Dennis. "The soccer sponsorship here is young but fragile. Our crowds are down and our dollars are down, so is another team going to improve the situation?"

"With the NSL as a whole losing \$2 million a season, it would far more practical to look at reform - to make the competition more commercially viable with the current

clubs becoming more visible in their own geographical area. If however, the existing teams are unable to spend money to increase their profile, then you need to ask the question whether they are helping the NSL to improve and are they then needed," said Dennis.

A huge incentive for the national competition however, came from the same December FIFA executive meeting that gave the Oceania Region direct World Cup qualification, where they also agreed to resurrect the World Club competition around 2005. The appearance money, let alone being able to play against some of the greatest clubs in the world, should inject extra spirit in the local game.

The BGC Lighting Night Series kicks off tomorrow (Wednesday) with eight State League clubs broken into two leagues, battling for the top two semi-final positions in each ladder. The competition will be incorporating some novel rules, including two 30-minute halves, a five-minute sin bin for yellow cards and a ten-second penalty-shootout starting from the half-way line, to avoid drawn games.

Meantime, the head office of the take-away franchise company Chicken Treat, which is situated in Dianella and part-owned by Glory's chairman Nick Tana, went up in smoke last Monday, to the tune of \$3 million. According to Glory's inaugural General Manager Roger Lefort, "there is no truth in the rumour that Mr Afkos and myself are number one and number two suspects," he quipped.

UNITED'S PATH TO SUCCESS

By Daniel Kuziow

Sydney United have surprised many pundits this season with their productive and efficient play that currently sees them sit just outside the NSL top six.

Under the watchful eye of ambitious coach Branko Culina, United have pulled off a swag of impressive victories that has caused many people to sit up and take notice.

In that side, the diminutive figure of Gabriel Mendez stands above all as the inspiration and creative force of the United midfield. The 29-year-old brings to his side an experience and flair that few can match and many still marvel to watch. The lynch pin of a side on the verge of a top six spot, Mendez enjoys the respect of his teammates and fans alike.

ABSW opened the interview by asking Mendez his view on the current form of the Enders Park-based side: "We have been doing quite well apart from the last couple of weeks. We did go through a bad spell at the club but hopefully we have come through that and we can pick up our form from here on in," Mendez said.

"The impact of the three overseas players has been

extremely positive in particular that of Vanja Ivesa who has played some outstanding matches for us but overall they have fit in really well at the club."

Mendez made his debut some 11 years ago at the beginning of the 1991/92 season and has since chalked up over 150 games in the NSL. His talents pushed him abroad and he was richly rewarded for his talents with 10 Socceroo caps from 1994 to 2000.

In that time, he has seen the state of the game in this country go through a number of transitions of which he revealed; "There was more experience some years ago and now there are a lot of youngsters on the park."

I guess that's because there's are a lot more Australian overseas and we have to accept that and try to produce as many players locally as we can."

'Chi Chi' as one of the elder statesmen in a squad that contains 10 players under the age

of 23 has been given the role of leader amongst men and it is a role Mendez seems to relish; "I now am more of a leader on the park and it is my job to make sure everything is organised on the park."

I try to make sure we keep our shape and that everyone communicates with the younger boys."

"I try to make sure we do the right thing by them and the team, and if we do that, we will guide them through parts of the game where they need a little bit of help and understanding."

Like most players hooked on

the round ball game, Mendez' ambitions for the future are simple yet essential to the survival of the game; "There is a lot of uncertainty with the league and what is going to happen in the future. I will just take it step by step. I want to play out the season with Sydney United."

"I would like to stay in the game as long as possible and hopefully one day come back and coach the younger kids and produce as many of these as we can. But time will tell," he concluded.



Gabriel Mendez: The spark in the Sydney United midfield.



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BLANCO OUT

(Continued from front page)

"As long as the coach maintains focus and has determination and ambition, he will succeed. It doesn't matter what age" he said.

His argument was proved right as Marconi recorded their fourth win of the season on Friday night, an impressive 4-1 victory over the Melbourne Knights. With a full strength line up, loyal supporters were treated to goals by Tony Sekulic, Grant Last (2) and Alex Brosque. The win has placed the Stallions above Northern Spirit in the NSL.

Despite their current standing near the bottom of the table, the teams above them have failed to pull away, reinforcing the closeness of the league.

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Yours Truly
Steve James

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Yours Thankfully
Leo Clarke



Before



After 3 months



Before



After 3 months

Emerton in elite company

Socceroos midfielder Brett Emerton is one of five quality midfielders vying for a berth in UEFA's team of the year poll.

The Feyenoord flyer has been nominated in the right midfield position along with AC Milan's Dutch star Clarence Seedorf, Real Betis' Joaquin Sanchez, Bayer Leverkusen's Bernd Schneider and Turkey's Umit Davala.

Emerton has performed wonderfully for the UEFA Cup holders during his time in Holland but missed out on playing in the final last year due to suspension.

Despite persistent rumours earlier this season that a move to the Premier League was imminent for Emerton, there has been no contact from potential suitors since the transfer window reopened.

Notable absentees in the poll, in

which fans get the final say of the makeup of the team and the coach,



Aussie star Brett Emerton could win a spot in this year's UEFA Team of the year.

include David Beckham, Luis Figo, Ryan Giggs, Robert Pires, Francesco Totti, Christian Vieri and David Trezeguet.

The striking positions seem the most contentious with Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Raul, Jon Dahl Tomasson, Pierre van Hooijdonk, Thierry Henry, Roy Makaay, Ruud van Nistelrooy, Filippo Inzaghi and Hernan Crespo all in the hunt for two berths.

German keeper Oliver Kahn looks the most likely No.1 although he faces stiff opposition from Iker Casillas, Gianluigi Buffon, Rustu Recber and Santiago Canizares.

Zinedine Zidane is the standout in the attacking midfield position but will be pushed all the way by Alessandro Del Piero, Pablo Aimar, Tomas Rosicky and Basel's Swiss ace Hakan Yakin.

Glory Happenings

Perth Glory has released youngsters **Todd Harnwell** and **Antonio Naglieri** from its first team squad.

Coach Mich d'Avray said the two players had been starved of opportunities through no fault of their own.

"They are both great characters and I am sure they will find first team soccer elsewhere. Sadly for them the competition for places was coming from experienced and talented players so it meant their opportunities were very limited.

With the transfer window opening we wanted to give them every chance to find another club without difficulty. Both players have been good servants of the club and put their heart into all areas including off field promotional work. The club and



Todd Harnwell (Left) & Antonio Naglieri (Right) have both been released by the Glory this season.

I wish them all the best for the future."

Meanwhile in other Glory

news, the side has gone back under lights and back to Saturday nights to ring in the New Year.

Last weekend's fixture against finals hopefuls the Football Kingz was the first match under lights.

Glory coach Mich d'Avray was confident that the switch under lights will attract more fans to Perth Oval.

"There is always a special atmosphere playing under lights," said d'Avray.

When I was playing in Europe it was always a little bit special and some of our greatest Perth Glory games have been played under floodlights. I am sure we will be seeing plenty of fans coming back to savour night time soccer at "Perth Oval in 2003."

Liparoti out for NSL season

South Melbourne defender **Robert Liparoti** will miss the rest of the National Soccer League season after suffering his second serious knee injury.

An MRI scan revealed Liparoti tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee on the weekend and will be sidelined for a minimum of six months.

It's a cruel blow for Liparoti who was enjoying the best form of his 79-match career after cementing a regular spot in defence, despite stiff opposition from Steve Losifidis and Nick Tolios.

"I've just got back and I felt really good," said the 24-year-old.

"Only three days ago I was telling Trimmers (South captain Paul Trimboli) how good I was feeling and now this goes and happens."

Liparoti injured his left knee against Carlton in October 2000 and underwent reconstructive surgery that put him out of the game for 12 months.

Following the latest setback, Liparoti has vowed to undertake the hard work needed to fully recover from injury.

"Having come back from the first one has made me a lot stronger and I know how much I really wanted to play," said the defender, who will visit the surgeon on Monday.

"The signs are that it (the damage) is not as bad as the first knee, so I'm hopeful that I will only be out for six months."

Liparoti injured the knee two weeks ago when he twisted it while chasing an opponent in South Melbourne's first away win of the season at Sydney United.



South Melbourne defender Robert Liparoti will miss the rest of the NSL season after suffering an unfortunate knee injury.

PFA turns up the heat on SA

The Professional Footballers' Association has accused Soccer Australia (SA) of putting a low priority on safety by not taking adequate measures to protect players from oppressive heat.

The issue was raised following Sunday's dour scoreless draw between Northern Spirit and Newcastle United in an NSL match played in temperatures of 27 degrees at Brookvale Oval.

United coach Ian Crook called for authorities to scrap afternoon matches, with the game kicking off at 5pm.

PFA chief executive Brendan Schwab said it was the responsibility of SA to ensure players were not in danger of suffering dehydration on hot days.

"What we need to ensure is that player and spectator safety is a high priority when it comes to fixturing issues," said Schwab, who wants to see SA implement a firm policy on playing in hot weather.

"What we've seen in the past is that Soccer Australia has readily compromised on health and safety because an issue such as lighting facilities or fixturing concerns will be paramount.

"There's obviously a very serious legal obligation - not only from Soccer Australia but by both clubs - to ensure that they provide a healthy and safe environment."

A spokesman for SA said the sport's governing body had guidelines about playing conditions, but it was the clubs which scheduled their own games.

He said on game day NSL administrators liaise with the match official, who assesses the information provided and decides whether to kick-off on time, delay or postpone the fixture.

He noted that NSL officials discussed forecast temperatures in the high 30s with home club Adelaide and away side Olympic Sharks days before a recent clash at Hindmarsh Stadium.

The players' association is constantly in touch with the Bureau of Meteorology in the lead-up to matches to monitor what is known as the wet bulb globe temperature.

A reading of between 23 and 28 on that scale means precautions such as regular water breaks should be taken to ensure player safety. Anything above 28 is considered extreme (it was 26 in Sydney on Sunday).

"I think it'd be fair to say that Soccer Australia requires constant pushing on our part to implement this measure," Schwab said.

"This policy is self-executing. It's incumbent upon Soccer Australia as the governing body to make sure that the players' safety is protected.

"Heat is an important issue, not



PFA Chief Executive Brendan Schwab

just from the point of view of player safety but if it's too hot it can affect the quality of the game and hence the spectacle."

As an example, Schwab said he was "bewildered" that SA scheduled a youth match between Australia and Fiji in Melbourne at 1.30pm on December 21.

"The disappointing aspect from our point of view is that SA is still dealing with the issue of heat in a reactionary manner as opposed to dealing with it proactively," Schwab said.

"It's noteworthy how serious sport such as rugby, the AFL and cricket are taking the issue of heat.

"Heat is an issue of such fundamental concern to the players in sport because it is a potentially fatal situation and it's not something to be bargained over."

Didulica is 'true blue'

Ajax goalkeeper **Joe Didulica** says his heart belongs with Australia but has warned that he would consider playing for Croatia if he is overlooked for the Socceroos.

"I've always said it's a decision you have to make from the heart and I am a true blue Aussie, although I am very proud of my Croatian heritage," Didulica said.

"My heart is with Australia and I would be honoured to be selected but if that doesn't come about then obviously I want to play international football so I'd have to consider options elsewhere.

"But Australia is my country and I'd love to represent Australia one day but it's not up to me, it's up to the coaching staff."

Speaking on SBS' TheWorldGame, Didulica said would be thrilled to be selected for next month's blockbuster friendly against England.

"I'd love to be called up (but) it's not my decision," he said.

"I do my job at Ajax and if Frank Farina and the coaching staff think I'm good enough then I'd be happy with a call-up, I'd be ecstatic."

Didulica has been in stunning form in both the Dutch first division and the UEFA Champions League this season.

His most notable performance must certainly be the Champions League clash with Valencia in late November.

In front of a hostile crowd at the intimidating Mestalla Stadium, Didulica almost single-handedly stopped the Spanish champions as Ajax came within a whisker of earning a priceless away win before Miguel Angel Angulo snatched a last-minute equaliser for Valencia in a 1-1 draw.

This sort of form has prompted a throng of European clubs to start knocking on the door at Ajax and with Didulica's contract running out at the end of the season, the decision is now up to him whether he stays in Amsterdam or makes a big-money move.

"It is tempting to leave with a lot of interest around Europe but I'm happy at Ajax," Didulica said.

"Ajax have been great to me and I've played over 20 games at the club and being involved in the Champions League also is a huge thrill.

"We're onto something big with Ajax with a young team and to leave at this stage would be disappointing

but it could happen, I'm not sure yet, I haven't made a decision."

In confirming that Ajax has put an offer on the table, Didulica dismissed reports that it is to the tune of \$700,000-per-season for four more years while insisting that he does have some options outside the Netherlands.

"There is an offer but it's definitely not that," he said. "There's been talk from around Europe - from Spain to Austria and France.

"Financially, we haven't spoken to those clubs. When I get back maybe something will be down on the table but with Ajax, they've spoke and I'm flattered with the offer but I just want to see what's out there.

"I'd love to stay with Ajax but we have to see what they have to say and what my future is at the club."

Despite his solid form, Didulica can't lay claim to having cemented the number one jersey at Ajax as an unlucky run of injuries has seen his main rival Maarten Stekelenburg actually start more matches this season.

Still, the 25-year-old from Geelong insists he has the full backing of Ajax coach and Dutch legend Ronald Koeman.

"Ronald Koeman has shown enormous belief in me throughout my campaign, last year and also this season," he said.

"Every time I've been injured and have come back he has put me into the starting line-up so he's shown enormous confidence in me and I've done the job for him every time I've gone out there."

"Being a free (agent), there's an opportunity to move but I've got to weigh up all the options and pick an option where I will be playing on a regular basis."



Joe Didulica has warned Australian officials that if he is overlooked by the Socceroos then he would consider playing for Croatia.

Carl Valeri - Scaling the Heights of Inter Milan

By Mark Stavroulakis

It's not everyday you hear or see any young 18-year-old Australians playing their trades in one of the biggest clubs in the world - Inter Milan.

The Italian giants last season went Australian crazy after signing two up and coming stars by the name of Nathan Coe and former U17 skipper Carl Valeri for their Primavera squad.

Coe has impressed many on-lookers at the club with his tremendous performances under the sticks while midfield whiz Valeri has also turned some heads.

ABSW's editor Mark Stavroulakis had the pleasure of catching up with current U20 star Carl Valeri just

moments before the Canberra-born midfielder left Australia, bound for Milano airport.

MS: How did you find your first Primavera season with Inter?

CV: It was quite different to what I expected, I went in May last year for five weeks to see how things were running at the club and found it great however I did not realise how difficult it was to break into a Primavera side.

At the moment the squad has a number of 83' born players who are getting the nod ahead of me and are playing really well. I was born in 84' so obviously they will gain first priority, so its been difficult these past five months especially being

I'm a family orientated fellow so getting used to not having my parents and friends around did take some time getting used to however I've been lucky to have a close friend in Nathan (Coe) who has been with me since the start of our stints at the club.

MS: Roughly how many games have you played for Inter's Primavera squad and how many goals have you scored?

CV: It's a mixed bag, I play basically every week depending on whether I do play for the Primavera squad or not. If I don't play for them then I play for the next team down which is basically every week.

I've roughly played around 4 games for the Primavera squad and scored one goal but like I said earlier, its not that easy cracking this squad as it is one step away from the big thing.

MS: Being at one of the best clubs in the world, how has your training methods been and has it been that much of a difference since your departure from the AIS?

CV: When it comes to Italian soccer the intensity is unbelievable. At training all the players play to win and if they lose their gutted. They've always got a point to prove and I guess that is the main difference that sep-

MS: How have you settled in the Italian lifestyle since your move to Milan last year?

CV: Through time you get used to it so its been ok, but I love Australia and love Canberra, always have and always will so it was always going to be difficult.

Milan is a nice city though, its not as clean as what I was used here in Canberra but people must realise that Milan is an old city comparing it to Sydney or Canberra.

The culture in Italy is the best - its only soccer.

They live, breathe the game. You go down every Sunday afternoons to the local bars and there will be hundreds of people glued to their seats watching Inter play, its fantastic.

Language wise I've progressed quite well, it was tough for me at the start but I did take Italian lessons before I left Australia that did help me along the way but I'm learning something new everyday.

MS: Being so close to the likes of superstars such as Vieri, Crespo, Dalmat, Recoba and the list goes on, have you had the chance to train or play against them?

CV: The first grade squad train right next to us so we see them almost everyday. Its great motivation for all the players to be next to these guys as that is where we all

something that gave me a huge buzz.

MS: Your contract details with Inter, how many seasons do you have left and what are your short and long term goals?

CV: I originally signed a three-year deal with the club so I have another two left.

My short-term goals is obviously cementing a spot in the Inter Primavera squad and starting every week. Also having the U20 World Cup coming up in March, that's another thing I'm looking forward to.

Long-term I guess is that if I do put in the good performances then hopefully the side look at me as a future first grader and the ultimate dream is to gain a first grade contract with the club.

MS: Has there been a good statistic in youngsters coming through the Inter ranks in becoming first team players?

CV: There's been a few standout players in this years Primavera squad.

There's a 20-year-old named Giovanni Pasquale who started against Ajax in the Champions League match and shares the left-back role with Coco, he's a tremendous talent.

Others include a midfielder by the name of Nicola Beati who regularly sits on the first grade bench then finally there's a Nigerian international called Martins who will be the next big thing.

The fans at Inter love him, I remember when the whole Ronaldo saga was unfolding at the club, there were signs saying 'Ronaldo Out - Martins In'.

MS: How did you rate your recent U20 performance against Fiji?

CV: I felt as though I did my best in playing well, however a player will always ask for more. I guess I could have done more things especially in the Fijian game but at the end of the day we won convincingly, that got us through to the World Cup which is what matters in the end.

I guess the hardest aspect was getting to know all the boys, just getting used to their game styles did take some time and will continue to do so but I thought we went through it quite well.

Also getting used to a new system 4-3-3 was also another new method but at the end of the day it all worked well.

With the World Cup just around the corner, I'm buzzing and can't wait to take part in it.

I've heard Dubai is a nice place but there's been talk that if a war breaks out, its quite close to Iraq, so at the moment it looks as though we will be meeting as a squad two weeks before the World Cup - hopefully!



Carl Valeri: Hoping for big success at Italian glamour club Inter Milan.

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Valeri in action against Fiji in the recent U20 World Cup qualifiers.

arates it from the Australian way and its methods.

However when it comes to off the park in terms of recovery and stretching, they are not as up-to-date as the Australians are.

I went through the AIS program and have been apart of the U17 and U20 Australian squads that taught me how to recover before and after every match.

I've used these experiences to further help me in Italy, but its good to see that the Australian method off the park rates amongst the best in the world.

hope to be one day.

I remember the first time we played against the first team squad, having the likes of Vieri, Crespo and Dalmat coming at you was such a daunting task. I couldn't believe my luck, I think I was struck with so much awe that really put me off my game.

The coach took me off at half time but he knew being my first game against the seniors was always going to be tough.

The next time we played them though I was ready for the task and did quite well. A little thing like beating Dalmat for the ball was



MACARTHUR RAMS SC

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Closing date for applications is Wednesday 22nd January, 2003.



National League Round 17 Reports



	Marconi Stallions	4
	Melbourne Knights	1

MARCONI revived memories of their title-winning past when they clinically destroyed the Melbourne Knights last Friday.

Attacking midfielder Grant Last scored in each half for the victors with the remainder from Tony Sekulic and Alex Brosque.

The win lifted Marconi off the bottom of the National Soccer League table and they have bagged four goals twice in their last three matches.

Melbourne Knights had few scoring chances and their hopes were further diminished when attacker Ivan Jolic was sent off six minutes into the second half after a clash with Michael Thwaite.

It was also a successful return for Marconi football manager Rale Rasic who took over the coaching role after the sudden sacking of Raul Blanco on Wednesday.

"It is four of five years since

the last time I won a game, but this was a special effort for Blanco," Rasic said.



Stallion style celebration: Grant Last shown celebrating his second goal of the match that saw Marconi trounce the Knights four-one.

No coach can transform a team in one week to produce superb moves and great finishing.

A spirited Marconi switched on from the kickoff, charging through the Knights defence with striker Joe Spiteri testing keeper Martin John in the opening minutes.

The early dominance was a forecast of the Marconi intentions and only ten minutes elapsed before the first goal was scored.

Chad Gibson on the left swung a deep cross into the penalty area for Sekulic to head past the Knights keeper as the defence stood off, waiting for an offside call.

Under-20 international Brosque was finding plenty of space on the left and Spiteri on the right with consistent passes from the midfield trio of Alex Costanzo, Last and Darren McDonald.

Marconi doubled their score five minutes before the break

when Spiteri barged around Rodrigo Vargas and planted a deep cross onto the head of the waiting Last.

Brosque made the third goal when he found Last who turned two defenders to score, while the young international finally got on the scoresheet with a rasping free kick in the 65th minute.

The Knights, whose closest attempt had been a first-half shot by Leon Buhic which hit the upright, picked up a consolation goal in the 79th minute when Gustavo Biscayzacu volleyed into the net from 22m.

"We didn't underestimate Marconi and knew they would be fired up and rally together after the events of this week," Knights assistant coach Lou Trani said.

"Last was good and the Marconi team was sharper to the ball and strung passes together."

Rasic was full of praise for the efforts of Last, Brosque and Spiteri with special mention of 18-year-old Thwaite, who was found by Blanco who forecast he would be a future Australian international.

"I laughed when Blanco made his forecast about Thwaite, but he would have to be considered on

tonight's performance," said Rasic. It was a complete turnaround for the Marconi team which had previously won three of its 14 matches and the goals

scored against Wollongong and the Knights now total half of the team's effort of 17 for the season.

*Source - AAP



Stallions striker Joe Spiteri shown fending off Knights defender Rodrigo Vargas from the ball.

	Football Kingz	1
	Wollongong Wolves	1

THE Football Kingz broke a goalscoring drought lasting 349 minutes when drawing 1-1 with the Wollongong Wolves in a NSL match in Auckland last Friday night.

Both teams ended the match at Ericsson Stadium with 10 men after the Wolves' Dino Mennillo and the Kingz' Patricio Almendra were sent off in sepa-



Kingz Chilean import Patricio Almendra saw red during the second half of the match last week in New Zealand.

rate incidents.

The Wolves also had their coach, Ron Corry, sent to the dressing room for protesting after his men were denied a goal through a doubtful offside call by a linesman.

The last time the Kingz scored in the league was on December 6 in their 2-0 win over Newcastle. The first half was scoreless. Patricio Almendra, seeing the Wollongong goalkeeper, Andrew Crews, off his line, started the game with a hopeful lob in the first minute, which ballooned over the bar.

This sadly was an indication of the shooting prospects for the rest of the half as both sides struggled to get on target on a slippery surface with a crosswind, which made accuracy difficult.

There was plenty of force in the exchanges and Mark Atkinson picked up a yellow card for holding his opponent. Liam Austin of Wollongong was lucky to escape with only a yellow after clattering Raf de Gregorio.

But the heaviest challenge was a fair one by Chris Jackson, which left the speedy Norm Sekulovski out cold. He recovered but was replaced at half-time.

His replacement, Dean Heffernan, quickly made his mark with a superb goal in the 52nd minute. Stuart Young provided the pass, but Heffernan turned his marker and drilled a



Dean Heffernan: The hard-working Wolves midfielder scored his debut goal for Wollongong in their one-all draw in New Zealand.

left-foot shot into the net.

It took the Kingz just five minutes to find the equaliser through Andrew Vlahos, who stabbed home after an Almendra shot and a Harry Ngata deflection caused confusion in the Wolves' goalmouth.

But the action came at the other end in the 75th minute when Wollongong got the ball in the net only for it to be ruled offside. Dissent saw Dino Mennillo sent off and his coach, Ron Corry, and another official banished from the bench. Almendra was sent off for elbowing a Wollongong player.

There was time for near-misses by substitute Paul Urlovic and Mark Burton and a letoff for the Kingz when Heffernan missed from close range in the last minute.

This was the sixth draw between the sides in three seasons.

*Source - AAP

	Newcastle United	0
	Perth Glory	1

By Pano Tagaroulas

A crowd of 6125 was on hand at Energy Australia Stadium to witness Newcastle United's first home loss in twenty-two months.

United's Robbie Middleby was out with injury while seventeen year old rookie Jobe Wheelhouse started on the bench for the Novocastrians. Perth were looking to move to the top of the table with their first ever win in Newcastle after a draw and two losses previously.

With less than fifteen seconds on the clock United gifted possession to Perth from the kick-off allowing Nick Mrdja to pick up the ball. The young striker played a pass towards the left touchline for Damien Mori, allowing the veteran to run at Matthew Bingley. The NSL's all-time leading goalscorer cut the ball back from the byline for Mrdja to tap in Perth's first goal at the near post.

On 6 Mrdja was again causing problems in the attacking third when he turned past Andy Roberts on the edge of the box. His resulting low shot was fired narrowly wide of the left hand upright.

The 21st minute saw Perth fail to capitalise on a counter attacking opportunity with three of their players up against just one United defender.

Mrdja's pass out wide to the right flank found Matt Horsley who was able to advance towards the penalty area. The former Wollongong captain's cut back was blasted over the bar by Mori.

Two minutes later Joel Griffiths, pass found Esala Masi whose powerful run saw him shrug off the challenge of Shane Pryce. The

Fijian international drove a low shot from just outside the area only to watch his effort fly just inches past the right post.

In the 36th minute a Masi cross from the right was cleverly left by Joel Griffiths allowing the ball to run through towards his younger brother Ryan.

However, the former Northern Spirit striker failed to trouble Perth custodian Jason Petkovic, firing his shot over the bar.

The two sides remained unchanged after the interval with the half's first chance falling to Junior on 55 minutes. The Brazilian dribbled past Milan Blagojevic and was unlucky not to extend the Glory's lead when his twenty metre effort cannoned off the crossbar.

In the 59th minute Mark Wilson picked out Matthew Bingley on the right wing with a pass from half way. United's experienced defender played a cross into the box picking out Masi a couple of yards off from the goal line. The powerful striker managed to get his head to the ball, however his effort was blocked by the challenge of Glory goalkeeper Petkovic.

On 63 Milan Blagojevic played a ball to Bingley on the edge of the box whose miss hit shot was deflected off Masi inside the area. Petkovic parried the ball but was unable to stop Masi from turning in the rebound. Masi was deemed offside by the referee and the goal was subsequently disallowed.

In the 84th minute a long ball from defence picked out Newcastle's Joel Griffiths in the box. The pacey striker got a touch on the ball which was turned into the net by an offside Eagleton who slid in towards the six yard box.

A minute later young seventeen year old midfielder Jobe

Wheelhouse was given his senior debut for United when he was brought on in place of Mark Wilson.

Two minutes before the end of regulation time Ryan Griffiths played a neat back-heel to his brother Joel on the left touchline. United's top goalscorer cut inside past the Perth defenders to the edge of the area where he saw his twenty yard shot bounce back into play after hitting the right hand post.

The 1-0 away win propelled Perth to the top of the NSL ladder and coach Mitch d'Avray was happy with the victory. He said, "From our side it's a great victory."

However, the Perth coach was quick to praise Newcastle saying, "I just know that we'll be back here again at the end of the season."

Crook, United's man in charge felt Perth deserved the win commenting, "As I say full credit to Perth they defended really well."

The Novocastrians remain in fourth place on the table but are now a staggering fifteen points adrift of the Glory.



Glory's Nick Mrdja struck in the first minute to gift Perth a one-nil victory over Newcastle United last Friday night.



National League Round 17 Reports



	South Melbourne	1
	Northern Spirit	0

By Alan Clark

South Melbourne defeated Northern Spirit by the only goal of the game to consolidate third place in the NSL Ladder on Sunday evening at Bob Jane Stadium.

Billy Damianos - celebrating his one-hundredth game for South - scored in the fifth minute, but despite significant pressure from the home side, South could not increase the lead due mainly to some goal-keeping heroics from the Sydney-siders' Paul Henderson.

"(Henderson) had a tremendous game," said South coach Danny Wright after the game. "He kept them in it. But that's the way the game panned out - it was only one-nil, but it's all about results."

Spirit coach Lawrie McKinna also praised his goalkeeper who pulled off a string of crucial saves at times when South seemed certain to pull away on the scoreboard.

"I felt South Melbourne had (the better of the game) for the first twenty minutes until we sorted out our midfield, but I felt we were a wee bit off the pace. We could have snuck (an equaliser), but overall I don't think we can argue with the result,"

McKinna said.

South Melbourne's goal came before the game had had a chance to settle.

Vaughan Coveny spotted a diagonal run being made by Michael Baird and fed him the ball down the inside-left channel, splitting the Spirit central defensive pairing of Julian Watts and Alex Tobin. Baird carried the ball to the bye-line before sending a low cross to the penalty-spot and Damianos swept the ball home past the diving Henderson. The game was barely five minutes old and it was South's first attack of any note.

Spirit's best moments in the earlier part of the game came through Jonathon Richter's running down the right where he shaded his Young Socceroo team-mate Massimo Murococa and forced in several handy crosses. Just after the quarter-hour he found himself in the clear after outpacing Murococa and decided to attempt a chip of South goalkeeper Eugene Galekovic which cleared the 'keeper's leap, but also carried the cross-bar.

"I thought (Richter and Murococa) nullified each other, (but) that Richter gave him too much respect," said McKinna. "I thought (Richter) didn't take him on (enough), you have to back yourself."

Richter's impressive game was to end

mid-way through the second half when he felt the bite of a last-ditch tackle on the edge of the penalty-area from a committed Mehmet Durakovic, which neither McKinna, nor any Spirit player objected to. "There's nothing wrong with a good tackle," said McKinna. "It was great timing."

The hot conditions had been tempered slightly by the delaying of the kick-off by one hour to 7:00pm, but the conditions were still sufficiently oppressive for referee Perry Mur to take the precaution of approving a mid-period drinks break after Coveny had been fouled at the half-way line.

The re-watering seemed to be of greater benefit to South as the home side crafted two good chances in as many minutes following the recommencement.

Steve Panopoulos let loose a cannon-ball shot from the edge of the area after a corner taken by Damianos was only partly-cleared. Henderson was forced into making a full-length diving save to turn the ball around the post for another corner, this time more convincingly dealt with.

Just before the half-hour, Coveny had a ball played to his feet with his back to goal at the edge of the area. He turned and shot with his left foot, but although it was well-

directed low to Henderson's right, it lacked sufficient power to pass him.

Within three minutes of the second-half, Baird had completely outfoxed Tobin by lifting the ball over him and running onto the now loose ball inside the area. His low shot had the speed taken off it by Henderson and Spirit scrambled the ball clear for a corner to relieve a dangerous situation. Tobin had been outrun by the speedy South front duo of Baird and Coveny, but Tobin's positional experience was fully employed to ensure the pace disadvantage was minimised.

South's margin of superiority on the park was not being reflected on the scoreboard, and Spirit remained in the game as a consequence, much to the discomfort of the nervous home support.

South's most culpable squandering of an opportunity arose just on the hour.

Coveny had been found by a diagonal ball and hesitated, seemingly as if awaiting an offside flag.

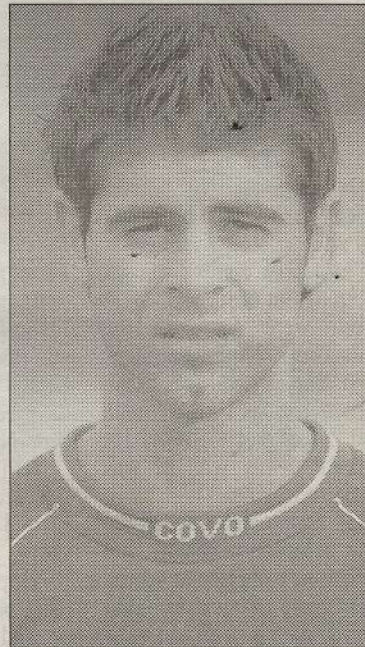
The flag stayed down and Coveny sped to the bye-line and cut the ball back to Zeljko Susa at the penalty-spot where it sat up nicely for Susa's preferred left foot. Henderson blocked and the ball ran free for Coveny, but the big Kiwi striker blasted wide from an acute angle.

"We probably should have wrapped it up," said Wright. "That's the most disappointing thing about the game."

South's nerves were on edge until the last, when Durakovic conceded a corner deep into added time.

When the ball was swung in high to the

far post, Galekovic made an ineffective attempt to gather and the ball bounced dangerously free inside the penalty area before the whistle sounded for a pressure-clearing free-kick awarded to South for an infringement on Galekovic.



South Melbourne's Billy Damianos celebrated his hundredth game for his club with a vital goal that gifted Danny Wright's men the three valuable points against the Spirit last Sunday afternoon.

	Brisbane Strikers	3
	Olympic Sharks	0

By Glenn Davis

Brisbane Strikers climbed further up the national league ladder to become serious finals contenders with an upset 3-nil win over reigning champions the Olympic Sharks at Ballymore on Saturday night.

Two goals in three minutes proved a killer blow for the visitors



Joshua Rose: Brisbane's exciting young prospect bagged a goal and played an instrumental role in the Striker's three-nil win over last year's Grand-Final winners the Olympic Sharks.

who have been dubbed the "Sydney Strikers" by local fans after a host of players in recent times left Brisbane for so-called greener pastures with the Sydney giants.

The Strikers got off to a poor start to the season and were tipped by southern critics to finish with the wooden spoon but a mid-season revival has seen the Strikers move from bottom of the table in round 12 to equal fifth, but seventh on goal difference with Adelaide and Parramatta.

While Olympic led the competition going into the clash with Brisbane, their second straight loss saw them surrender top spot to Perth Glory.

Brisbane weathered a mountain of first-half pressure and was lucky to go into the half time break on level terms before taking control of the game in the second stanza.

Former Socceroo Steve Laybutt started the ball rolling with a header for the opening goal in the 51st minute before the under-rated Josh Rose drove a dagger through the heart of Olympic in the 54th minute for a commanding advantage.

The Sharks started well and looked in control early but squandered at least three clear chances from trio Greg Owens, Tom Pondeljak and Ante Milicic.

One of the best chances for Olympic came after former Strikers midfielder Jeromy Harris broke clear bursting through the Strikers' defence before laying off perfectly for Milicic who pushed his shot

wide with only keeper Jason Kearton to beat.

Brisbane came out fighting after the break following a strong pep-talk from coach John Kosmina and soon turned the game to its advantage when Laybutt latched onto a David Pilic cross to head past former Brisbane Strikers keeper Clint Bolton at the far post.

Olympic were given little time to digest the setback when Brazilian Fernando Rech provided a perfect flick-on for Rose, who easily beat Bolton at close range three minutes later.

The Strikers, which has a past record of squandering leads, maintained the momentum when Anthony Roche scored in the 74th minute after capitalising on a superbly played through ball.

The Strikers could have made Olympic's trip north more miserable when skilful midfielder Peter Grierson hit the post late in the match.

It was one of a number of scoring chances the Strikers failed to convert in the dying stages.

Kosmina was delighted with the victory, which maintained Olympic's winless record in Brisbane.

"It was a good solid win at home," Kosmina said.

"We had a good first half-hour and then became sloppy and let them in a couple of times."

"I had a chat to a couple of blokes at halftime and to their credit they came out and did the job."

"We've still got a lot of work ahead. It doesn't matter now how important this game was, next week against Adelaide is going to be equally crucial."

"The bottom line is we have to just keep winning."

	Parramatta Power	1
	Adelaide City	1

By Peter Damalas

Adelaide City Force came away from Parramatta Stadium the happier of the two sides after a 1-1 draw. In an eventful match again marred by multiple bookings and a controversial penalty, Zoran Matic's crew defended stoutly for the duration of the second half, spoiling Parramatta's many attacking raids.

A second half penalty by Aurelio Vidmar was cancelled out minutes later by left wing-back, Brendan Renaud. In what has been a week of comebacks for some of Australia's most well respected coaches, Zoran Matic achieved another positive result on Saturday evening, after the impressive 3-0 victory over Marconi



Brendan Renaud: Scored Power's equaliser against Adelaide City.

Stallions. The match began openly, and while there was a fast pace, both sets of defenders marked their opponents closely.

Playing on the left, Renaud was involved with two crosses cleared by the defence. His forays down the touchline forced his opposite, Goran Lozanovski, to track back into defensive mode. The Adelaide City player was booked for a late challenge on 40 minutes.

The key man in Parramatta's midfield was Brad Maloney. His extraordinary free kick in the 34th minute clipped the corner of the bar. After a foul on the left touchline, 'Bugsy' took a gamble and played a ball in that initially looked like a cross, and was assisted by the wind to evade the 'keepers outstretched arms. The ensuing header was cleared off the line. The Power entertained a crowd of with good movement off the ball and long periods of possession. While winger Ahmad Elrich was marked out of the game by Fyfe and Pantelis, last week's goalscorer John Buonavoglia turned provider when his cross towards strike partner Salapasis was inches too high, ending a slick passing move.

The 27 year old had defender Carl Veart fooled with some fancy footwork, only for his cross to be headed wide by Maloney in stoppage time. Adelaide's best effort came via the boot of Lozanovski, whose shot was palmed away by Parramatta's goalkeeper in the 25th minute.

The second half almost began in embarrassing circumstances for Adelaide custodian, David Scarsella, son of Oceania Confederation

President, Basil.

After receiving a backpass on the byline, Buonavoglia charged down the clearance. Had the kick been taken metres infield, Parramatta would have opened the scoring in the 51st minute.

As it panned out, it was the away side that were awarded a dubious penalty when former Socceroo, Aurelio Vidmar was adjudged to have been brought down by Elrich after an innocuous challenge. As referee Con Diomis pointed to the spot, the home crowd proceeded to jeer. Vidmar converted from the spot to give the Force an unlikely lead.

But Parramatta showed tremendous character to equalise only seven minutes later. A telepathic dummy from Salapasis afforded John Buonavoglia with enough space for a shot at goal which rebounded into the path of Renaud, who placed the ball into the roof of the net to make the score 1-1.

And like the match at Olympic Sharks last weekend, Nick Theodorakopoulos urged his players forward in an attempt to score the vital second goal. A right foot volley by Renaud was pulled back for a high foot, while Adelaide at times played with all eleven players behind the ball. To Adelaide City's credit, they held on for the one point which keeps them in the hunt for a finals spot.

Nick Theodorakopoulos was pleased with the home side's performance. "The players displayed strength and conditioning and kept on powering home. It was an outstanding performance with the ball, and we did well with the second phase plays" he said.

With three championships under his belt, Adelaide City coach Zoran Matic admitted that "it is getting tough, especially after the unexpected resignation of Charlie Villani".

BYE — SYDNEY UNITED

Neill hopes for Worthington reprieve

Blackburn's Australian defender Lucas Neill was hoping for a reprieve after a contentious yellow card that could cost him a place in the second leg of the Worthington Cup semi-final.

His booking in last week's march that ended in a 1-all first leg draw with Manchester United was his fifth yellow card in Rovers' Cup run and would rule him out of the return match unless referee Uriah Rennie withdrew the charge.

"I am hoping the ref will have a look at it as I will have five bookings and will be suspended from the next leg now," Neill said.

"I'm hoping that we can get something out of it."

Neill went down in the penalty area with three minutes to go but instead of being awarded the spot kick which could have given Rovers an invaluable away win, he was booked for diving.

Neill wasn't sure whether the tackle deserved a penalty, but claimed he would have scored if he hadn't been brought down.

"I don't know, but I cut across him and I would have gone on if I hadn't been clipped from behind," he said.

Fuming Blackburn manager Graeme Souness felt robbed.

"I thought it was a penalty. It certainly wasn't a booking,



Blackburn's Australian defender Lucas Neill.

Lucas is not a diver," Souness said.

Most commentators agreed and said Neill's clash with United's Mikael Silvestre could have been worth a penalty but certainly did not warrant a card.

Neill was now focussing on the second leg at home at Ewood Park regardless of his status.

"Hopefully, now we can take them back to our place and go on and win the tie," he told Blackburn's website.

"It's halftime in the tie, but you never get the advantage over Manchester United. We start all over again now, at Ewood we will be patient and hopefully the chances will come."

MILLWALL TRIALS FOR PACKER

Olympic Sharks midfielder Andy Packer jetted off to London last Wednesday for a 10-day trial with First Division Millwall.

The two-footed winger hopes to do enough in trials to win a permanent contract offer from Lions boss Mark McGhee. McGhee invited Packer to the New Den for tests after being tipped off about the former Australia youth international before Christmas.

Tribalfootball.com managed to catch Packer at Sydney airport yesterday before his flight. "It's a tremendous opportunity and I'm delighted to get this chance," he said. "I'm ever so grateful to my agent and also Mr. McGhee for organizing such a trial."

"I've had a couple of trials in Europe in the past, but they've been a bit hit-and-miss. But Millwall have been fantastic, taking care of my trip



Andrew Packer jetted off to England last week for a trial with English First Division side Millwall.

over and also my accommodation. "I've been given an excellent chance to show Mr. McGhee what I can do. I don't think a trialist can ask much more than to have 10 days in such conditions."

"I'm very excited." He continued, "You know, over the last 12 months I've felt very comfortable in the National League - perhaps a little too comfortable."

"I think now's the time to take my own game to a higher level and I hope that can be with Millwall." Packer's agent, Lou Sticca, told tribalfootball.com this morning: "We're obviously very pleased that Millwall have taken such care with Andrew."

"They have a great reputation here in Australia for taking on and

developing our players.

From Jason Van Blerk and Alistair Edwards, to Lucas Neill and now Tim Cahill, it's a great chance for Andrew to sign for a club that respects Australian football so highly.

"Andrew is the next big-name player the Sharks are likely to sell. The season before last it was Brett Emerton (to Feyenoord), last year it was Lindsay Wilson (to PSV Eindhoven) and now it's Andrew's chance."

KEWELL'S PAY RISE

Socceroos forward Harry Kewell is on the verge of putting an end to recent transfer speculation by pledging his future to Leeds United in a deal worth \$160,000 a week.

Leeds Chairman Peter Ridsdale has reportedly told Kewell's management that he is willing to pay whatever it takes to keep the 24-year-old at Elland Road, with a contract said to worth \$8million over four years on the table.

Already the highest-paid player at the club, Kewell has been linked with possible moves to either Spain or Italy, but a reluctance to move from Yorkshire, where he and his young family are settled, is believed to have helped Leeds' chances of keeping him.

Ridsdale has concluded that the sale of Lee Bowyer to West Ham and loaned Olivier Dacourt to Roma should slash the wage bill enough to increase Kewell's earning capacity.

And with striker Robbie



Leeds star Harry Kewell is expected to gain a pay-rise in staying with the Premier League side.

Fowler and defender Gary Kelly also said to be available for transfer and midfielder Seth Johnson targeted by Middlesbrough, the Elland Road club could significantly cut the debt by the end of January.

Once Ridsdale has reduced the club's debts with further sales in the coming weeks, he and Kewell's manager Bernie Mandic will then re-open negotiations.

OLYMPIC SHARKS vs FOOTBALL KINGZ



SATURDAY 18TH JANUARY
at TOYOTA PARK

⇒ Main Game Kick-Off 7.30pm

⇒ Gates Open 5.30pm

⇒ Corporates boxes will be opened at 6.00pm



★★ See The Stars Under the Stars ★★



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(Manager)



Clint Bolton



Troy Halpin



Harry Ngata



Patricio Almendra



Ken Dugdale
(Manager)

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SUPER SUMMER TITLE STILL UP FOR GRABS

By Paul Schiavo

With only two rounds remaining, the inaugural Super Summer League has come down to a battle of two teams, pre-tournament favorites Qld Lions and this year's surprise packets, Sunshine Coast. In what promises to be a battle royal, both sides will face each other next week at Lion's Stadium in a match that in all intents and purposes comes down to a final.

This weekend's games saw the Sunshine Coast, with what on paper was the easier fixture against a winless Toowoomba at Maroochydore, whilst the Lions had the difficult journey away to the Gold Coast. The round's final game saw Rochedale Rovers make the journey south to Lismore to do battle with the Suns.

GOLD COAST 2
QLD LIONS HT 0-1 2

Gold Coast coach Karl Herdle had predicted a game that would be a mixture of guts, determination and some skillful football and he was proved correct. Not only did it serve up those qualities but throw in four goals, some controversial decisions, a send off and a late equalizer and you couldn't really ask for much more.

Prior to the game both sides were still in contention for the Super Summer League title so a win was a must especially for the Coast side. Lions could come away with a point if results went their way on the Sunshine Coast but for the Coast it was the last throw of the dice.

Both sides began in a cautious manner but it was the Coast through Alex Panic that provided the first attacking flurry by earning a corner in the second minute.

But it was the visitors that opened proceedings in the seventh minute.

Lion's midfielder Terry Hughes played a fine through ball that sliced the Gold Coast defense wide open. Cleary, in goals for the Coast, seemed to have the ball covered but inexplicably seemed to miss the ball completely while attempting to clear and it was left for Chris Di Sipio to stroke the ball into a vacant net.

GOLD COAST 0
QLD LIONS 1

This early goal inspired Lions and for the next ten minutes they began to dominate, especially in midfield.

In the 12th minute, Sean Kitching found Di Sipio again on the right hand side of the box but his first time shot flew just wide of the right hand upright.

Lions had their passing game in order whilst the Coast were playing a long ball game that was playing straight into Lions' hands.

Seventeen minutes passed before the Coast had its first real opportunity and what a chance it was.

After some good work on the Gold Coast right hand side, an Owen Formosa cross-found forward Luke Sleight unmarked in the six-yard box but his header failed to find the target. It was this frustration in missing such an easy chance that probably led to Sleight's booking a minute later for a late challenge.

The Coast was starting to gain in confidence and it was the Lions now that were the team under pressure. Most of this pressure was stemming from the fact that

the Lions were unable to hold onto the ball for any length of time as they had been doing earlier and like the Coast were resorting to the long ball game.

In the 23rd minute the Coast were awarded a free kick on the left hand side of the box. The John Costello cross was punched by Lion's keeper Griffin McMaster to Coast midfielder Peddle who should have done better with his snap shot from just outside the box.

It was the Coast now that were applying real pressure on the Lion's back four and it was only a goal line save by Ben Fisher in the 25th minute after a neat one two by Anthony Macri and Alex Panic that kept the score in Lions' favour.

But as is so often the case it was the Lions that absorbed the pressure and should have increased their lead moments later.

A dangerous free-kick was cleared by the Lion's defense and fell kindly to Chris Di Sipio just inside the Coast half. He was left with a two on one situation with fellow striker Danny Flaskas but Di Sipio held his pass up for a fraction too long and Flaskas was caught in an off-side position with what would have seen the striker with only the keeper to beat.

Young Jason Kenny was calling the shots in the Coast midfield and was able to find his wide players with some fine long balls, switching play from left to right that was causing the Lion's defenders all sorts of problems.

One such foray brought about an excellent save from McMaster after a goalmouth scramble in the 35th minute. The Lion's defense was being severely tested now and Michael Sciardi and company were battling to keep the Lions ahead until the half time whistle.

Right on the half-time whistle a fine pass by Anthony Macri, (similar to Hughes's pass earlier in the half which led to the Lion's opener) found Owen Formosa but his first touch let him down and his cross-come- pass skewed wide of McMaster.

Half-time: Gold Coast 0 Qld Lions 1

Although it was the Lions that had started the more aggressive, it was the Coast that had dominated for large parts of the half and could consider them a little unlucky to be trailing at the break. However this would be unfair to the Lion's back four especially keeper Griffin Caster, Ben Fisher and Michael Scared who were repelling everything the Coast were throwing at them.

The normally dominant Lion's midfield of Hughes and Viler was being kept in check by the Coast's Peddle and Kenny and apart from the error that led to the goal, Cleary was having a quiet evening. Even Lion's danger man Danny Flaskas was having a quiet game by his standards.

The game really came alive from the restart.

From the kick-off, Alex Panic weaved some magic on the left hand side and after beating player after player crossed to substitute Aaron McGuinness on the far post to calmly side foot his shot into the net.

GOLD COAST 1
QLD LIONS 1

All of Lions' good work in the first 45 minutes was undone by a brilliant piece of Alex Panic magic in the first minute of the second half.

How would the Lions react to this jolt?

We found out the answer only a minute or two later when a determined run from Terry Hughes through the middle of the park forced Cleary to make an excellent save to his right. From the ensuing corner a Chris Di Sipio shot flew just wide of the target.

It was end to end now as both sides searched for what could have been the winning goal.

In the 51st minute a Danny Flaskas shot was parried by Cleary and cleared by the Coast to Aaron McGuinness on the right. After some good work on the right, his cross found Sleight again in a great position in the six-yard box but as in the first half his header failed to hit the target.

Although the match was very competitive, it was being played in the right spirit and both teams were giving it their all. Because of this there was a period of about five minutes where the flow of the game was being interrupted by a series of free kicks. It was one of these infringements that led to the Coast's equalizer.

In the 57th minute a series of wall passes between Alex Panic and Aaron McGuinness led to a foul in the area by defender Jarod Lowe.

Penalty.

The Lions players contested the decision as they believed there was little contact and any contact that was made was accidental. However the decision stood and Alex Panic drove the ball low to McGuinness's left.

GOLD COAST 2
QLD LIONS - 1

The Coast knew that they were in the driving seat now and were pushing for a third that would wrap up the contest.

In the 67th minute, a fine passage of play on the Coast right hand side involving a number of players saw the ball then switched to the left where Anthony Macri found himself with a two on one and only had to pass to his left where an unmarked Gold Coast player would have had an unchallenged route to goal. However, Macri chose to shoot weakly into the arms of McMaster.

It wasn't long before McMaster was called into action again this time saving with his feet after a goalmouth scramble.

Lions knew that they needed to find that something extra in the 20 minutes or so that remained and it was Terry Hughes that was to be that spark.

In the 75th and 76th minutes, Hughes made two great runs taking on defender after defender, the first laying on a pass that the normally reliable Chris Di Sipio completely mistimed with the goal at his mercy and the second again laying on a pass to substitute Scott Royal with Cleary well beaten only for Royal to let a defender make a last ditch tackle to keep the scores intact.

Then in the 77th minute you could have been forgiven for thinking that Lions' dreams of an inaugural Super Summer title were well and truly over as forward Chris Di Sipio received two yellow cards, one after the other for dissent.

Thirteen minutes to go and Lions facing defeat for the third time this season.

To their credit however, Lions found some inner strength from that send off and although the Coast still made a number of chances (coach Herdle was incensed at a number of offside decisions awarded against his side) it was Terry Hughes in the 85th minute that conjured up the equalizer with an Alex Panic type run on the right and after a fortuitous rebound, found the net with a rasping left footed drive from inside the box.

QLD SUPER SUMMER LEAGUE NEXT WEEK FIXTURES

All Games Kick-Off at
7.00pm

SATURDAY JANUARY 18

Queensland Lions
vs
Sunshine Coast

Rochedale Rovers
vs
Gold Coast City

Toowoomba Raiders
vs
Soccer Far North Coast

GOLD COAST 2
QLD LIONS 2

The final flurry from both sides made for an entertaining final five minutes as both sides strived to find the winner. However the full time whistle sounded and I suspect the Lions would have been the happier of the two sides especially when news of the Sunshine Coast result filtered through.

Best for the Coast were Alex Panic, Aaron McGuinness and Jason Kenny whilst for the Lions Michael Sciardi, Terry Hughes and Ben Fisher stood out.

Lion's coach Gary Johnson, whilst delighted with the way his chargers came back after the dismissal of Di Sipio must be anxious to get back to the Lion's Stadium where his team have played their best football. Their normally reliable passing game doesn't seem to be working away from home and they lack the speed and incisiveness out wide that a Cody Lovell would bring. Also the Di Sipio send off means that the speedy forward will miss the remainder of the Super Summer League season.

However, they get their chance next week to put things right when they host the Sunshine Coast in what should be a blockbuster of a contest in a match that will go a long way in deciding this year's Super Summer League Champions.

Again Gold Coast coach Karl Herdle will reflect on another one that got away. This has been the Coast's third draw and on all three occasions the Coast would count themselves a little unlucky not to have come away with all three points.

On this occasion the Coast didn't play with the same flair that they showed in the last game against Lions but one would think that the two-week break wouldn't have helped them. However as previously mentioned they have a wealth of talent that will be an enormous resource in years to come under the guidance of Herdle and the coaching staff on the Coast.

In the rounds remaining matches the Sunshine Coast were surprisingly held to a scoreless draw at home to Toowoomba, which has opened the door for Lions leading to their top of the table clash at Lion's Stadium that will have a great bearing on the destination of this year's championship.

The week's other result saw Rochedale Rovers continue their fine form of late to defeat the Far North Coast Suns 5-1 in Lismore.

Letters to the Editor

New Year - New Dreams!

Dear Sir,

The New Year is a time to set new goals and what better way to begin the new soccer year with the establishment of some goals for soccer in this country.

Firstly the Socceroos must gain regular international matches. This has started well with the upcoming friendly against England scheduled for next month. A game such as this will promote the efforts of the national side and I believe draw more members of the community to supporting the game.

But this must be an ongoing thing. We have all seen when the national sides from around the world play matches; the support they get from their country is immense.

It is therefore safe to assume if we start now with the international schedule, then come qualifying for the 2006 World Cup, support will be at an all time high.

Our overseas stars must also be willing to play every single match for the Socceroos otherwise the above exercise will prove to be futile. As representatives of Australia these players have a moral responsibility to promote their country and coming out to play for Australia can only do this.

Soccer Australia must hold the values of soccer close to their heart if they are going to promote the game.

They must secure new sponsors in order to finance their various jurisdiction and above all must get a media contract so that the domestic competition can be shown to the public.

The NSL is suffering because of this. Crowd numbers are down and support dwindling because the game is in no way promoted through the media. The media is a huge social organ and we have seen in other instances it has a huge influence on the public. Why not then use this to influence the public to support local soccer?

For the NSL, they must improve their standard of play in order to attract the fans and the sponsors. Quality results will attract quality attention. True there has been some credible action, but it must become a regular thing.

To everyone they must unite behind a common cause. I believe I have spelt these out and that common objective is to improve the standard and quality of soccer across the board. When this happens soccer will become so much bigger and on par with the game around the world.

Alan Ross,
Belconnen, ACT.

GIVE HOLMAN A CHANCE

Dear Editor,

I think young Brett Holman has been treated rather harshly in regards to the issue of not playing a couple of games for the Young Socceroos recently.

At the age of 18, he still has a lot of developing left but from what I've read and heard, starting and playing in the Dutch First Division, something must be right for this youngster to be where he's at today.

Australia is currently thriving on rich young talent. The best thing at the moment is our youth. Every one is after them and every club wants to have an Australian on their books.

I think it's sad that some managers and coaches disregard certain cases as to why the player was unavailable for selection.

In Brett's case, he said that he wanted to come down however having six matches in as many weeks prompted him to stay in Holland.

I'd like to know had the roles been reversed to anyone else, what they'd be doing?

Playing in Europe is something that takes a lot of time and effort.

From reading the article printed in last week's ABSW, young Brett has figured in a number of matches and it would have been detrimental to his career had he gone.

I think he is the only player at that age to be starting at a first division club overseas, an incredible achievement that should not be scoffed at but it's a bonus we have players such as this.

We must respect them as they are our future - hopefully we see players like Brett Holman don the green and gold jersey soon.

Frank Crisco,
Merrylands, NSW.



Rising young Aussie star Brett Holman

WHERE IS THE SUPPORT?

Dear Sir,

Last week's result that saw Parramatta beat Olympic although a tough competitive game was sadly only watched by no more than a few thousand spectators.

It is sad that derby matches such as that one fails to attract the attentions that previous derby matches would have.

There was a hell of a lot riding on that match.

For example, Parramatta was filled with players who have previously been employed by Olympic and their coach also has had a relationship with the club, so a lot would have been riding on the match.

Likewise, Olympic needed to win the match in order to maintain their four-point buffer at the top of the table and this match was the biggest threat to that.

So I fail to see why soccer fans would not have been attracted to this match.

It is a sad state indeed when games such as this fail to attract the fans and is perhaps a reflection of the current attitude of fans towards the game.

I believe soccer in this country is promoting many talented youngsters and while many would regard the NSL as weaker than previous years I would say that it is actually stronger and many youngsters currently in the competition will one day be overseas, so it may be a chance for many to see them before they make it big.

Let's hope that the next time a derby match comes around the crowds will come out and support the match for it is only when these matches are supported that the game will continue its revival.

Peter Melrose,
Eastwood, NSW.

NEW SPIRIT

Dear Sir,

After reading your article in last week's paper about the Northern Spirit gaining a new sponsor, it surely has put some light in a season the club would rather forget.

Currently sitting on the bottom half of the NSL Table, it's come in due time that the club receive some good news.

The squad itself has a lot of going points that any potential sponsor would like to have.

I think the main issue is the fact that the squad has a number of exciting young stars on show.

Five young players I think is saw in ABSW a few weeks back made the squad, a tremendous achievement for any club.

I know it's been rather tough this year with crowd droppings and the fact that the club set out on a bang, all has turned upside down for the one time glamour club.

However, if the side does nail down this sponsor then this would breathe new life to the Spirit and who knows, in a year or two with the right backing they could even go for a top two finishing.

Craig Newson,
Northbridge, NSW.



We want a full Gate!

Dear Sir,

As an Aussie Soccer supporter I would like to see the House Full sign on the gate between Melbourne Knights and South Melbourne is Australian Soccer's gold mine.

I know they like their Aussie Rules but that's played in the winter.

I love my Aussie Rules too and I hope we never lose our game, but the sport is a bit limited with Soccer the world is ours.

That's why I support the world game in the summer, so if I can do it in Perth then I'm sure they can do it in Melbourne.

I hope all of Melbourne come out to support this derby and watch two of Melbourne's traditional soccer clubs put in on the line.

This game should be able to attract a full house at the Telstra dome, if soccer supporters of Melbourne came out in force as we know they can.

The New Year is here and it's time for the positive vibrations to return to our great game.

On the 12th February our Aussie Warriors will do battle against our traditional rivals England this will truly be a historical moment in Aussie soccer history.

I just wish I could be there to support our men.

This game should be used to celebrate Oceania's direct qualification, go Aussie dare to fight, dare to win, what ever you do on the 12th of February 2003 make sure you don't miss this historical chapter in Aussie soccer history.

The road to the world cup of 2006 commences at Upton Park, England. Be there!

Go Socceroos!

Paul Botari,
Yokine, WA.

RE: WAKE UP WARREN

Dear Sir,

In response to Mr Steve Tsonis's letter dated 7-1-03, I would like to add my support that former Socceroo Johnny Warren was way out of line in saying that Oceania did not deserve a spot in Germany's World Cup in 2006.

I've respected him for a long time, he is a pioneer for soccer in Australia however that comment did throw me off a bit about what he stood for?

He was one for change, one that battled hard for getting the name of soccer on everyone's lips in this country but after a few comments he made after hearing the great news of direct qualification, I had different views with Warren.

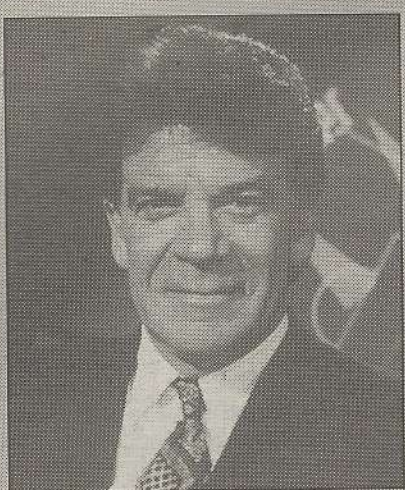
Everyone knows that even though Oceania is classed as an easy passage towards the World Cup, gaining a spot will no doubt boost football in all parts of Oceania in a big way.

Can you imagine that if the Socceroos do make the World Cup what exposure football will receive?

The media exposure will be terrific, the TV Channels will be showing everything that has to do with football, a dream that I have yet to see for sometime.

The World Cup every four years does have this effect however having Australia in it will obviously make it an even bigger event.

From the email
Steven Cengic



Johnny Warren.

Aussies Doing Us Proud

Dear Sir,

It's great to see the many Australians playing overseas receive special praise from their coaches for their efforts on the field.

Craig Moore has continued his form and is constantly receiving the plaudits from his Rangers coach, while Tony Vidmar has impressed Steve McClaren over at Middlesbrough.

However I believe that Paul Okon should receive special attention for his efforts at Leeds United. For a long time Okon was barely able to make the Leeds reserve side, yet his persistence and commitment has seen him move up the ranks to start in the Leeds midfield ahead of such other players as Olivier Dacourt. It is a credit to him that he has stuck with it and pursued the opportunity presented to him when many others would have chucked in the towel.

It may come as no surprise then that Leeds have had a revival to their fortunes this season that coincides with the entry of Okon into the side. So congratulations Paul Okon. You deserve to be where you are and deserve to be our Socceroo captain.

Chris Lidic,
Melbourne, VIC.



Craig Moore is travelling well with Scottish giants Rangers FC.

OFF THE CROSSBAR



By Allan Crisp

FORMER FORCE FLYER JOINS THE SPIRIT

Shane Thompson spent 14 years of his formative football life playing for Adelaide City, but his NSL future now lies with Northern Spirit.



Thompson, 24, started with the Adelaide City Under 10 team, longing for the day he could make his national league debut with the Force.

He progressed to City's Premier League side and was allocated the number 22 shirt in the NSL squad in 2000.

Unfortunately, the dashing wing back was never chosen in a Force starting line-up, nor did he make an appearance off the bench.

Thompson was snapped up by the Con Makris owned Premier League club Adelaide Galaxy towards the end of the 2001 season and was set to switch to northern suburbs club Enfield Falcons for season 2003, when a bolt from the blue offer arrived from Spirit coach Lawrie McKinna.

"I'm thrilled to be getting

back in the action because it's been three months since I last played," Thompson said.

"I've always placed a heavy emphasis on fitness because I want to be able to fulfil my ambition to play at the highest possible level." Thompson began his junior soccer as a striker before expanding his experience as a right-sided midfielder and then attracting attention as an attacking flank man.

His earlier grounding as a striker surfaced at Premier League level when he often moved into scoring positions in and around the penalty box.

Thompson grants former coaches John Perin and Sergio Melta with credit for assisting with his development as a versatile player.

And Thompson is aware that David Mitchell and McKinna, whose overseas contacts are boundless, could boost him towards his ultimate goal of becoming a full time professional.

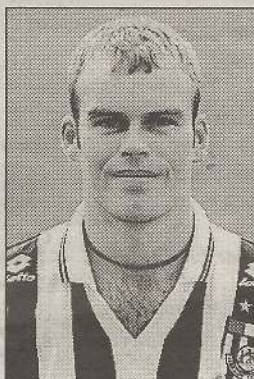
MEDAL MAN IN SA SQUAD

New SA coach Buggy Nyskohus has lured dual Melta Medal winner Bradley Armour into the State squad for season 2003.

Ex-Adelaide City defender Armour, who was unavailable last season, has been joined by other newcomers Ben Moore, Shane Pearce and Leno Sattin.

Goalkeeper Moore has been cleared from Galaxy to join the ambitious Enfield City Falcons.

Missing from the State squad which emerged unconquered from the Fasta Pasta Centenary Season in 2002 are Jamie Perin (retired), Mark Moore (working in New Zealand), Ryan Moore (injured), Sean Widera (injured),



Bradley Armour: Former Force defender has made the 2003 SA squad.

Lee Robertson (overseas), Barney Smith and David Menechella (omitted).

The 2003 SA squad is Brad Armour, Corey Artone, Justin Bralic, Sam Barbaro, Michael Brooks, Lachlan Campbell, Rick Cerracchio, Marcin Kierno, Robbie Matosevic, Daniel Menechella, Bill Misailidis, Ben Moore, Shane Pearce, Michael Pirone, Leno Sattin, Frank Sergi, Jason Trimboli, George Tsonis, Jun Udagawa, Aaron Westervelt, Mark Yates.

Coach: Buggy Nyskohus. Team Manager: Alan Horsfall. Trainer: Peter Duke. Gear Manager: Joe Janco. Commissioner: Arthur DiFede.

STATE LEAGUE JOUST

The Noarlunga Bulldogs have rallied to the cause of State League clubs who are bemoaning the lack of a pre-season summer series.

Noarlunga have indicated its willingness to conduct a tournament at its Wilf Taylor home ground.

At press time, Noarlunga had nods from Seaford Surfers, Hills Hawks, Cobras, SASI and Port

Lion Pirates, but would like two more starters to form two four team groups.

Noarlunga chairman Patricia Maslin is awaiting calls from likely participants on 8386.2931.

BIG GUNS HELP FALCONS

David Mitchell and Lawrie McKinna have accepted an invitation from Enfield Falcons coach Robbie DeTrio to coach and instruct his newly promoted Premier League team during a full-on bonding weekend at Wirrena Res. on January 18-19.

Enfield is progressing nicely in the signing stakes, recruiting Jimmy Tsekinis and Ben Moore from Galaxy and Vas Parhas (Blue Eagles), while negotiating for Andy Doran and Adam VanDomelle from Modbury Jets.

SASI youngster Tony Hatzis and Lyndon Parry are other play-

sibility.

Meanwhile, new Para Hills Knights coach Michael Brooks is working feverishly to recruit Aaron Westervelt and Shane Pearce, while Salisbury youngster Brendon Deeley has been impressive at training.

Brooksie is expecting big things from Deeley (son of the celebrated Ray) and young Gawler-based stopper Ben Cockerill.



Joel Porter: Scored whilst on trial with French club Guingamp last week.

Meanwhile, MetroStars, under the coaching baton of ex-SA coach Michael Barnett, will call TK Shutter Reserve, Klemzig its Premier League home ground for season 2003.

A newly positioned pitch, agreeably placed close to the clubrooms should satisfy both home and visiting patrons alike.

JOY FOR JOEL

Olympic Sharks and Soccerroo striker Joel Porter had a nice big taste of European football last weekend when he played and scored in a reserve team match with French club Guingamp.

James Tambakis, the astute player manager of 24-year old, Porter, was not surprised at the

impact made by the former West Adelaide Shark and Melbourne Knights forward because "he rates him very highly."

FULL HOUSE?

The window of transfer registration reopens tomorrow, (January 15) but Adelaide City Force is unlikely to open its shutters except to admit a cooling breeze.

That's because the Force has arguably its most talented, ideally balanced and widely diversified squad in at least a decade.

Of its current squad, City has fielded 22 of its available manpower with striker Robbie Saraceno and defender Aaron Goulding yet to get a call up.

Injuries and suspensions could assist the cause of that youthful pair, particularly should the Force attain its ultimate goal of contesting the finals.

REDS REGROUP

Campbelltown Red Devils, one of SA's most innovative SA clubs, aims to return to the Premier League as pronto as possible.

Having lost experienced

goalkeeper Andy Allen to Playford Patriots, the Reds have signed an admirable replacement in former State team custodian Archie Christakos.

Also on Campbelltown's hit list is Raiders striker Theo Anastasiou, who announced his retirement after Raiders Premier League championship triumph last season.

Anastasiou is firm in his resolve to quit the Premier League scene, but has told Campbelltown he would be prepared to help its promotion bid by banging in a few goals.

HOT TRIAL

The recent pre-season trial match at The Paddocks saw Para Hills emerging 3-1 winner over Playford Patriots.

Despite the intense heat, rival coaches Michael Brooks (Para Hills) and David Miller (Playford) were both happy with their charges.

How hot was it? Playford media man Ian Luker reports that the Under 16 District Cricket game scheduled for that day was called off!

Radio 1197am RPH Adelaide

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SLY STRATEGIES

By Richard Kreider

I'm sure Perth Glory won't mind if ABSW take a dig at a certain article in their matchday program of their last home game against the Kingz.

Especially the soccer skills section, which has confused many an expert reader, let alone an aspirant junior player.

The instructions recommended groups of three with

one ball.

X passes to Y who receives and turns quickly as possible. Y then passes it on to Z.

Well, I've been studying the diagram for quite a while and I'm still having difficulty tracking down Y & Z.

Are the Glory coaching staff reluctant to share their training tactics with the outside world?

Any suggestions?

Soccer Skills with Alan Vest

Alan Vest is a former professional player and coach. He has written a book on soccer skills, 'Soccer Skills with Alan Vest', which is available for purchase. The book covers various aspects of soccer, including passing, shooting, and set pieces. It is a comprehensive guide for players of all levels.

Did you know?

Alan Vest is a former professional player and coach. He has written a book on soccer skills, 'Soccer Skills with Alan Vest', which is available for purchase. The book covers various aspects of soccer, including passing, shooting, and set pieces. It is a comprehensive guide for players of all levels.

ADVANCE AUSTRALIA FAIR

Advance Australia Fair is a book that provides information on the Australian soccer scene. It covers the history of the sport, the current state of the game, and the future prospects. It is a must-read for anyone interested in Australian soccer.

NSL TRANSFER WINDOW RE-OPENS

In accordance with the FIFA Regulations for the Status and Transfer of Players (implemented by FIFA in September 2001 and revised numerous times thereafter), Soccer Australia is required to nominate two "windows" of transfer registration periods for the National Soccer League.

The two periods confirmed with FIFA for the 2002/2003 NSL season were:

1st August 2002 to 15th September 2002

15th January 2003 to 15th February 2003

Accordingly, Soccer Australia anticipates a flurry of transfer activity following 15 January (and until 15 February 2003) from many NSL clubs in altering their player lists, including the potential to register new players,

transfer existing players to another club or sending/receiving players on loan.

Soccer Australia has also allowed some 'specific NSL' exemptions to the FIFA Regulations to accommodate the particular needs of our premier domestic competition, namely the registration of goalkeepers outside of the official transfer periods, registration of amateur players outside of the official transfer periods and registration of a short-term contracted player following the expiry of that short-term contract.

FIFA Regulation for the Status and Transfer of Players Chapter 1 - Player Registration Article 2 - Registration periods 1. Each national association will decide upon the establishment of two registration periods per year, according

to the following principles:

a) The first registration period will start, at the earliest, when the national championship has ended and finish, at the latest, before the subsequent national championship begins. This period should, in principle, last for no longer than six weeks.

b) The second registration period will occur approximately in the middle of the season. This period should, in principle, last for no longer than four weeks and should be limited to registrations for strictly sport-related reasons, such as technical adjustments to a team or the replacement of injured players, or in exceptional circumstances.

FIFA has also indicated that "amateur players transferring within the

same national association shall be exempt from these restrictions, special provisions can equally apply to the loan of players and we hereby authorise the national associations to register outside of the established transfer registration periods all football players who were not bound by an employment contract before the expiry of the registration period, in the event they have ultimately found a club to register with."

Whilst this FIFA policy has caused much discussion internationally, especially in countries where this revision has introduced new registration policies, all national associations are strictly bound by the principles outlined under Chapter III, Articles 5.2 of the FIFA Regulations governing the Status and Transfer of Players (complete document available from www.fifa.com <http://www.fifa.com>)

LEEDS HAIL AUSSIES

Paul Okon is staking a strong claim to maintain his Soccerroo place with his excellent form at Leeds United.

Leeds United coach Terry Venables hailed the recent form of Paul Okon "I am delighted with him, I'm disappointed he wasn't able to be involved earlier but now he's here and in each game he's got better."

Meanwhile fellow Aussie Mark Viduka is relishing his return to form after a shoulder injury. Viduka is starting to hit the back of the

net with regularity and his return to form has coincided with the clubs climb up the Premier League ladder.

To add to the good news is the form of teammate Harry Kewell who is widely regarded as the best midfielder in the Premier League this season. Kewell is improving with every game and is close to the scintillating form that made him one of the hottest prospects in world soccer.



Paul Okon: Could stake a claim as Soccerroo skipper with good performances at Leeds United.

BROSQUE SIZES UP THE WORLD



By Daniela Raco

He is one of the country's hottest young stars. Gifted goal-poacher ALEX BROSQUE stood out like a beacon in Australia's eleven-nil romp over Fiji in the first leg of the Oceania World Youth Cup final.

Living up to national coach Ange Postecoglou's billing that he is the emerging Harry Kewell of Australian soccer, the current Young Socceroo is a certainty to step into the Olympic team.

The 19-year-old is also in his second season in the NSL, having broken into Marconi's senior side little over a year ago.

He is now a permanent fixture in the Marconi side with six goals this season. He is in scintillating form, notching up a hat trick in his return game for his League club, and incidentally lifting them off the bottom of the table.

At a time when players have to use their soccer skills as a passport to earning big money, young Brosque is a player of "immense possibilities". The expectations of Brosque are high.

The left-footed striker should be in the frame for senior selection for the next World Cup. But, let's not get ahead of ourselves. Before he jets off to Europe to hone his skills on international grounds (only time will tell), I speak to Alex about his biggest fears, gourmet cuisines, and his nomination for the worst haircut in the League!!

PLAYER'S POSITION - Striker.

NSL CLUB - Marconi Stallions.



Alex Brosque: Marconi's rising star.

DR: How would you describe yourself as a player?

Good speed, attacking, quick dribbler, and like taking on defenders.

DR: From what age have you been playing this great game?

I've been playing since the age of three for a local side named Welcome Sports. At the age of six I played for Smithfield RSL for one year before joining Fairfield Athletic and continuing on with them until I turned twelve. I then joined up with Marconi's sister club, Southern Districts. I played in the Colts at the age of sixteen, and then played at the AIS for one

DR: You have been billed as "our next Harry Kewell". How do you feel when you hear such labels?

It's an honour to be seen and recognized as having anywhere near as much potential talent as Harry Kewell. But, I don't like being compared to anyone like him. People watch me play expecting a lot more than what I give. Although it does play on your mind when people come and watch, I don't let it get to me.

DR: The Young Socceroos have been labeled the nation's best junior team to date. You stood out like a beacon against Fiji. Can you describe your experience under Coach Ange Postecoglou?



Brosque shown celebrating with good friend and funny man Eric Anabalón.

I played my first senior game for Marconi at the age of 18.

DR: Will the squad taste Championship glory this season?

We have got a good enough team to make the six. We need to turn things around from now. Of the next eleven to twelve games, we will play eight home games. We need to win all our home games and go from there.

DR: Alex how is the team doing on the park?

We are second last at the moment. We have had injuries. It's one of Marconi's worst ever performances. No-one wants to be part of a losing team - that's enough motivation for us to win.

DR: And off the park?

Off the park, we hang out together. I live near a few of the boys, so on weekends we meet up to go out.

DR: Do you have aspirations to break into European football?

Yes, I'd like to have a go in Europe. That's where the money is, and that's where everyone sees you. There's not much coverage in Australia.

Not really. I'd like to play for the Seniors - there'd be nothing better - but I have a job to do with

the U20's in qualifying for the World Cup in March.

DR: Can you describe your passion for playing?

It's in my blood. My Dad played, his Dad played. Even when I come home, it's on the television. The passion is great.

DR: Rate your own soccer skills out of 10.

6/10 - I'm a far way off from the likes of a Maradona.

DR: Is it disappointing to see crowd number dwindling at League clubs, including Marconi?

It wasn't too long ago that I was coming to games as a spectator. As a player, I've seen big turn outs - Marconi played a Uruguayan team in front of eight thousand spectators.

Personally though, I think it's disappointing to play in front of poor crowd numbers. The bigger the numbers, the better the play. Everyone lifts.

DR: What makes soccer such a popular sport around the world?

It's an exciting game to watch. There are characters like Denilson - even at training he is doing something special.

DR: What will it take for Australia to be World Soccer Champions?

The direct entry will make it easier. It will be interesting to see how we go. It will take a lot of work. Maybe we will do a Senegal!

DR: What league do you rate as the world's best?

To watch - The English League. To play - The Spanish League.

DR: If you could play for any team in the world, which one would it be?

Either Real Madrid, right next to Ronaldo, or Liverpool because they're a personal favourite.

DR: Is there a soccer player that you model your game on?

Alvaro Recoba, who plays for Uruguay and Inter Milan. He has an amazing left-foot and is exciting to watch.

DR: What are the qualities of a good coach?

To motivate his players and manage his team well. To be able to put his best eleven on the park, and know how to get the best out of his best eleven.

DR: In one word describe Coach Raul Blanco.

The man? Direct. The coach? Focused.

DR: Who is the funniest character in the game today?

Eric Anabalón, because I never stop laughing when I'm with him.

DR: What do you do in your "downtime"?

Sleep or hang out with mates.

DR: What is the best (or perhaps worst) excuse you've heard someone use for missing training?

Someone came to training and said they didn't know they had training the previous day.

DR: Do you know of any pre-match mishaps (missing players, two left boots, etc)?

In an away game against the Knights one of our players, Tony Perinich, lost his bag at the airport and had to borrow all his gear for the game.

DR: Any early predictions for season 2002-2003?

In no particular order these teams will make the Top 6.

- Perth Glory
- Olympic Sharks
- Newcastle
- South Melbourne
- Melbourne Knights
- and of course, Marconi.

DR: Who is the last person you would like to be stuck in an elevator with?

Sasa Radulovic, because he'll talk non-stop about how bad his life is.

DR: If you uncorked a genie in a bottle, what would you wish for?

I'd wish for a shoe box full of money that never runs out.

DR: If you could travel back in time, where would you go?

The last Michael Jackson concert in Sydney - I would have loved to have been there.

DR: If you could choose any actor to play you in a movie, who would it be?



Brosque shown in action with the Young Socceroos.



The young Stallions star bases his game around Alvaro Recoba.

The former AIS graduate has been likened to heart-throb Enrique Iglesias.

Eddie Murphy, because he'll make me look funny.

DR: What is your favourite late night snack?

Doritos and Coca-Cola.

DR: Which teammate do you refuse to share a room with?

Angelo Costanzo. Everyone thinks he has got Attention Deficit Disorder because he'll keep you up all night yapping. Sleep would be impossible.

DR: Which teammate could do with a new wardrobe?

Myself. I wouldn't mind a couple of new outfits.

DR: Which member of your squad would top Cleo's most eligible bachelor list?

Stacy Alogdellis.

DR: Where would you rate?

In the middle of the pack.

DR: Who would you trade places with for a day?

Alvaro Recoba.

DR: What is the biggest misconception about sportsmen?

That we're all meatheads. We don't know anything else apart from playing sport.

DR: If you could have any supernatural power, what would it be?

Next week Daniela Raco interviews Melbourne Knights star Ivan Jolic.

PHILLIPS: OLYMPIC NEED TO IMPROVE

By Peter Damalas

While the 2-1 loss last weekend to Parramatta Power may have raised a few eyebrows in the Olympic Sharks camp, coach Gary Phillips insists that the best is yet to come this season.

The Sharks were played off the park by a rejuvenated Power side, led from the front by ex-Olympic youth player, John Buonavoglia. After suffering only their second loss this season, and first at home since Round 2 of last season, the two horse race for the minor premiership has well and truly opened up. The top spot for this season could be decided when Olympic travel to Perth in February.

"We've been a bit scrappy this season, there's no doubt about that. But we can only get better. At this stage it is more about picking up points. We do need to improve both defensively and offensively" Phillips said.

The former Sydney Olympic player, who stepped into a coaching role in Queensland after retiring, stressed the importance of finding a balance between the experienced players and youth.

"At the crucial point last season we got the balance right, and the likes of Juric, Halpin and Milicic have assisted the younger players. Everyone plays an important role, even goalkeeper Clint Bolton, who I consider to be our most important player" he said.

In terms of personnel, season 2002-03 has proved a difficult test

for the club's management. The short term stay of defender, Mark Byrnes (who has since moved to Perth Glory), and the loss of other players due to Young Socceroo commitments, overseas trials, injuries and suspensions have tested the club's resources.

Key midfielders Andrew Packer and Joel Porter were absent for the trip to Brisbane because of trials, while Srhoj, Halpin and Parisi have also missed a number of NSL matches.

"We don't stand in the way of a player's development, I guess it is part of the club's philosophy. They come to the club as assets, and we help them become better players, if it means going overseas, then so be it" Phillips said.

While Olympic's impressive run at home was undone last week-

end, Toyota Park has become somewhat of a fortress for the Sydneysiders. The state of the pitch, however has rung the alarm bells, and the injury to Parramatta's Jack Sobczyk has increased calls for Olympic to switch playing venues in the near future.

"We always knew that it would take time for the winter grass to die and the summer grass to grow. Unfortunately that is nature's way. The pitch should be fine after the match against the Kingz (18/01)" Phillips said.

The 39 year old began coaching with the Queensland Academy of Sport, before accepting an offer to coach the Tonga national squad in the Oceania World Cup qualifiers in 2001.

"Tonga was a real eye opener

for me. It was something I had to do as I was growing a bit stale in Queensland" he said.

With his insider knowledge, Phillips believes that the Pacific nations are about 20 years away from challenging Australia and New Zealand in World Cup qualifiers.

And with the likes of Frank Farina and Angie Postecoglou taking the reins of the national teams, Gary Phillips is hopeful of coaching Australia.



Gary Phillips: His Olympic Sharks side are yet to reach their best form of the season.

Boasting the highest scoring rate in the National Soccer League, many have credited Olympic's rise to the coaching philosophy of Phillips, which stresses possession and penetration.

"The coach needs to adjust his philosophy at every level and based on the players at his disposal. The team has to play to its strengths, and Olympic's strength is getting at opponents" he said.

"The game is changing all the time, and the younger coaches may be more in touch with these changes. They make up for lack of experience with enthusiasm. I think coaching the youth teams from the under 17s level is a good stepping stone for the national team" he said.

ACT President Valeri put to the Test

By Graham Cooke

Walter Valeri receives his first important test as Soccer Canberra president when he travels to Sydney on Saturday for a meeting between Soccer Australia officials and State presidents.

At issue is the topic which is never far away when football people meet these days - money.

For Soccer Canberra, the position is especially delicate. It has been withholding fees from the national body because it claims it is owed money from an earlier period. In situations like this it is often a question of



New Soccer Canberra President Walter Valeri.

who blinks first, and Valeri's performance will be watched keenly by his home constituents.

The president, who was elected on a promise to run an inclusive administration, promised he and chief executive Alan Lee would not be the only ones making the trek to national meetings in future.

"If, for instance, the main topic of the meeting is marketing and promotion, then it does not make sense for me as president, or Alan, as an administrator, to go along when we have a specialist board member (in this case Paul Jones) sitting back in Canberra," he said.

"If we have people involved with

certain talents, then I believe in using them to the full."

There had been no further developments on the sponsorship front during the Christmas break, but Valeri repeated an annual meeting promise that if additional money became available, some of it would be funneled directly to the clubs.

"They supported us by accepting a substantial rise in fees that secured the future of Soccer Canberra," he said. "The board will not forget this."

The new board will meet on January 27 with the first assembly of clubs scheduled for early February as administrators prepare for the 2003 winter season.

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE 2002/03

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE 2002-2003 NORTHERN DIVISION

RESULTS - ROUND 17

FRIDAY 10 JANUARY 2003

ACTAS	0	Northern Spirit Youth (Mailer 40')	1
Newcastle United Youth (Cowburn 10', Schirripa 17', Falla 28', A. Hughes 55', Wilkinson 78')	5	Marconi Mustangs (Somogyi 52')	1

SATURDAY 11 JANUARY 2003

QAS	0	Olympic Sharks Youth	0
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SUNDAY 12 JANUARY 2003

Canberra Deakin (Ivanic 19' 70' 90'+)	3	Wollongong Wolves Youth (Bertakis 8', Martin 71' 90'+)	3
Marconi Stallions Youth	0	AIS (Nedeljkovic 42', Casey 45', Bosnar 66')	3

BYE - Parramatta Power Youth
BYE - Sydney United Youth

NORTHERN DIVISION - ROUND 17

	P	W	D	B	L	F	A	Pts
Parramatta Power Youth	14	8	3	3	3	35	19	27
Canberra Deakin	16	7	5	2	4	41	24	26
AIS	11	7	3	4	1	19	7	24
Wollongong Wolves Youth	14	6	5	2	3	34	21	23
Newcastle United Youth	15	6	5	2	4	26	20	23
Northern Spirit Youth	14	6	4	2	4	14	10	22
Sydney United Youth	13	5	3	3	5	29	20	18
Olympic Sharks Youth	14	4	6	2	4	15	14	18
ACTAS	13	5	2	3	6	20	24	17
QAS	15	4	3	2	8	18	37	15
Marconi Stallions Youth	14	3	4	3	7	15	34	13
Marconi Mustangs	15	0	3	2	12	6	42	3

NORTHERN DIVISION FIXTURES - ROUND 18

SATURDAY 18 JANUARY 2003

Northern Spirit Youth Vs Sydney United Youth
Time: 4.00 pm - Venue: Christie Park

Olympic Sharks Youth Vs Canberra Deakin
Time: 5.30 pm - Venue: Toyota Park

AIS Vs Parramatta Power Youth
Time: 7.00 pm - Venue: AIS Soccer Field

SUNDAY 19 JANUARY 2003

Wollongong Wolves Youth Vs Newcastle United Youth
Time: 4.00 pm - Venue: WIN Stadium
Marconi Mustangs Vs ACTAS
Time: 5.00 pm - Venue: Marconi Stadium

BYE - Marconi Stallions Youth
BYE - QAS

PREMIERSHIP BIZZARIO

Nige and Fergy here from BananaTV's Premiership Bizarro. Every week we're going to give you our views and opinions on what's going on, and off, in the English Premiership.

How much more Wayne Rooney can we take?

He scores, he's benched, he scores against Arsenal, he's sent off, he's not signing, he's signing for Real Madrid, he's only played a handful of games. We're exhausted and we're only reading it. So, Bozo Bosnich finally gets the bullet. His portly presence was requested by the Chelsea top brass to "please explain", before Xmas. What did Bozo do? Not turn up, on the advice of his doctor.

Don't you normally get lawyers involved at this stage? Did Bozo think he was pleading the 5th Amendment? Somebody tell him what country he is in! We're expecting Bozo to not even be able to get a game for a junior school side.

Maybe he'll return here to his native land and turn up on Neighbours as Harold Bishop's new chum. Lager Lou Leek Bowyer is surprisingly the most sought after thug in

England. His Hart is at the Lane, where he can expect to clean up millions thanks to the Bosman ruling.

He is currently touting his services to the league's morally corrupt clubs, Birmingham City (owned by a pornographer) and West Ammers (Roederage presides over a club with a long history of thuggery).

remember Julian Dicks and Razor Ruddock? It seems that crime does pay. What is going on with the refereeing in this League? The latest catastrophe was committed by Urinal Rennie. He books Aussie Lucas Neill for diving, when it is plain to everyone (except Man Utd fans) that he was being molested by Mickael Silverashtray.

Then, not more than 5 minutes later, Urinal shows his inconsistency by seeing nothing wrong with the triple salko thrown by Ruud Van Horseface.

Just the latest and we're sure there will be plenty more to follow.

See you next week.
Nige and Fergy

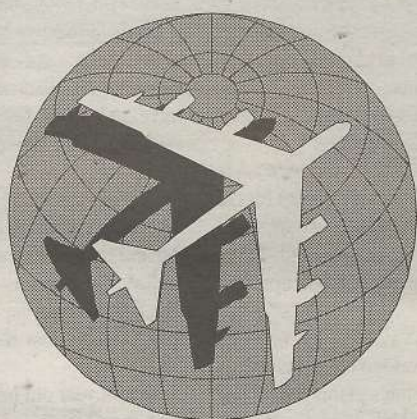
To catch Nige and Fergy on Premiership Bizarro, their internet TV show, go to www.bananatv.com

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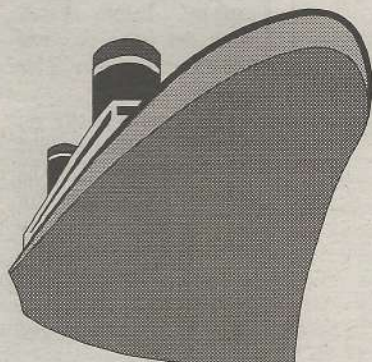
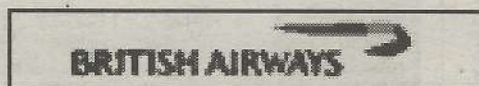
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NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

After Round 17	TOTAL							PTS	HOME						AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	BYE	F	A		P	W	D	L	F	A	P	W	D	L	F	A
PERTH GLORY	16	12	1	3	1	33	13	37	8	7	0	1	20	6	8	4	2	2	18	16
OLYMPIC SHARKS	16	11	2	3	1	34	20	35	8	7	0	1	16	4	8	5	1	2	13	7
SOUTH MELBOURNE	15	8	3	4	2	24	19	27	9	7	2	0	20	8	6	1	1	4	4	11
NEWCASTLE UNITED	16	6	4	6	1	24	16	22	8	5	2	1	18	6	8	1	2	5	6	10
ADELAIDE CITY FORCE	15	5	4	6	2	25	22	19	7	3	3	1	14	8	8	2	1	5	11	14
PARRAMATTA POWER	15	5	4	6	1	19	19	19	8	3	2	3	11	11	7	2	2	3	8	8
BRISBANE STRIKERS	16	5	4	7	1	28	32	19	8	2	1	5	11	18	8	3	3	2	17	16
WOLLONGONG WOLVES	16	4	6	6	1	18	22	18	7	2	4	1	6	6	9	2	2	5	12	16
SYDNEY UNITED	15	5	3	7	2	14	21	18	8	5	1	2	10	7	7	0	2	5	4	14
FOOTBALL KINGZ	15	4	5	6	1	18	21	17	7	2	4	1	9	7	8	2	1	5	9	14
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	15	4	5	6	2	26	35	17	8	4	2	2	16	17	7	0	3	4	10	18
MARCONI STALLIONS	15	4	2	9	1	20	24	14	6	2	1	3	9	11	9	2	1	6	8	16
NORTHERN SPIRIT	13	3	3	7	1	16	27	12	5	1	1	3	5	10	10	2	1	7	8	17

FOOTBALL KINGZ

(A Vlahos 56')

WOLLONGONG WOLVES

(D Heffernan 51')

Referee: Ben Williams. Crowd: 2,354. Venue: Ericsson Stadium.
 Cautions: M Atkinson (FK) 20', H Miyazawa (FK) 82', B Blake (WW) 8', L Austin (WW) 22', D Mennillo (WW) 46'.
 Red Cards: P Almendra (FK) 86', D Mennillo (WW) 74'.
 Teams: FOOTBALL KINGZ: Utting, Atkinson, Perry, Jackson, Burton, Almendra, Vlahos (Campbell 71'), Ngata, deGregorio (Turner 73'), Miyazawa, Pritchett (Urlovic 68').
 Subs Not Used: Bannatyne (gk).
 WOLLONGONG WOLVES: Crews, Austin, Cervinski, Castro, Wells (Aliffi 68'), Lyons, Young, Sekulovski (Heffernan 46'), Farah, Mennillo, Blake.
 Subs Not Used: Timpano, Whalan (gk).

MARCONI STALLIONS

(T Sekulic 8', G Last 40', 55', A Brosque 63')

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

(G Biscayzacu 78')

Referee: Peter Green. Crowd: 2,017. Venue: Marconi Stadium.
 Cautions: C Gibson (MS) 16', D Longo (MS) 19', I Erdogan (MK) 83'.
 Red Card: I Jolic (MK) 52'.
 Teams: MARCONI STALLIONS: Turnbull, Gibson, Costanzo, Longo, McDonald, Enes (Webb 88'), Spiteri, Brosque, Last (Anabalon 70'), Sekulic, Thwaite (Perinich 61').
 Subs Not Used: Alogdellis (gk).
 MELBOURNE KNIGHTS: John, Piorkowski (Buljubasic 74'), Vargas, Marth, Vasilevski, Rocco, Buhic (Biscayzacu 63'), Erdogan, Jolic, Ovcin, Cervinski (Fa'Arodo 46').
 Subs Not Used: Hrehortsin (gk).

NEWCASTLE UNITED

PERTH GLORY

(N Mrdja 1')

Referee: Mark Shield. Crowd: 6,125. Venue: Energy Australia Stadium.
 Cautions: S Thomas (NU) 19'.
 Teams: NEWCASTLE UNITED: Beltrame, Roberts, Thomas (Dodd 57'), Bingley, Wilson (Wheelhouse 84'), J Griffiths, Baillie, Blagojevic, R Griffiths, Masi, Eagleton.
 Subs Not Used: Zoricich, Willis (gk).
 PERTH GLORY: Petkovic, Horsley, Harnwell, Hassell, Gumprecht (Byrnes 87'), Miller, Mrdja, Junior, Mori, Pryce, Tarka.
 Subs Not Used: Danze, Caceras, Matassa (gk).

PARRAMATTA POWER

(B Renaud 63')

ADELAIDE CITY FORCE

(A Vidmar pen 57')

Referee: Con Diomis. Crowd: 2,412. Venue: Parramatta Stadium.
 Cautions: K Salapadidis (PP) 2', N Orlic (PP) 62', M Valkanis (ACF) 36', G Lozanovski (ACF) 39', L Pantelis (ACF) 60', N Budin (ACF) 62', A Vidmar (ACF) 77', D Pellegrini (ACF) 90'.
 Teams: PARRAMATTA POWER: Reddy, Ceccoli, Orlic, Beauchamp, O'Sullivan, Maloney (Cardozo 75'), Salapadidis, Zorbas, Buonavoglia, Renaud (Langdon 90'), Ehrich.
 Subs Not Used: Thompson, Vukovic (gk).
 ADELAIDE CITY FORCE: Scarsella, Fyfe, Kovacevic, Valkanis, Pellegrini, Pantelis, Veart, Vidmar, Lozanovski, Pelosi (Kemp 70'), Budin (Terminello 90').
 Subs Not Used: Tunbridge, Godley (gk).

BRISBANE STRIKERS

(S Laybutt 50', J Rose 53', A Roche 74')

OLYMPICS SHARKS

Referee: Eddie Lennie. Crowd: 3,170. Venue: Ballymore Stadium.
 Teams: BRISBANE STRIKERS: Kearton, Stefanutto, McKain, McLaren, Grierson (Carbone 80'), Rech, Laybutt, Pilic (Webber 60'), Heath, Rose (McKay 64'), Roche.
 Subs Not Used: Baldock (gk).
 OLYMPIC SHARKS: Bolton, Kohler (Caravella 64'), Juric, Srhoj (Souris 74'), Pondejak, Milicic, North, Owens, Harris (Paris 80'), Durante, Ishida.
 Subs Not Used: Hughes (gk).

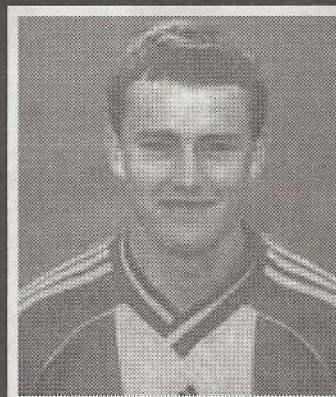
SOUTH MELBOURNE

(B Damianos 5')

NORTHERN SPIRIT

Referee: Perry Mur. Crowd: 5,080. Venue: Bob Jane Stadium.
 Teams: SOUTH MELBOURNE: Galekovic, Iosifidis, Durakovic, Panopoulos, Coveny, Susa (Trimboli 75'), Lia, Murdocca (Tolios 82'), Baird (Buljan 62'), Kisnorbo, Damianos.
 Subs Not Used: Anastasiadis (gk).
 NORTHERN SPIRIT: Henderson, Watts, Bell (Walsh 77'), Spencer, Tobin, Ferguson, Hutchinson, Tomasevic (Osman 90'), Fisher, Wilkinson, Richter (Kwasnik 67').
 Subs Not Used: Acevski (gk).

PLAYER OF THE WEEK



GRANT LAST (Marconi Stallions)

The former AIS graduate took the Melbourne Knights to the cleaners and showed many spectators why he was one of the best ever to leave the Institute. His two goals for new coach Rale Rasic was enough to see off Marth's men in a match that ended four-win in the favour of the Stallions.

It was the attacking midfielder's first goals of the new NSL season, and with Rasic now at the helm, the former 74' Socceroo coach will be looking for more of the same from Last.

A few weeks ago Grant was given ABSW's 'bad boy of the week' for seeing red against the Sharks during the first half of the match.

The tides have changed with the 21-year-old gaining plaudits from both officials and the media about his terrific performance last Friday night.

Luciano Trani, Melbourne Knights' Assistant coach best summed up Grant's performance. "Last was good and the Marconi team was sharper to the ball and strung passes together."

LEADING GOALSCORERS

Name	Club	Total
MORI Damian	Perth Glory	12
GRIFFITHS Joel	Newcastle United	11
PELIKAN Anthony	Melbourne Knights	9
YOUNG Stuart	Wollongong Wolves	9
RECH Fernando	Brisbane Strikers	7
BROSQUE Alex	Marconi Stallions	7
ROCHE Anthony	Brisbane Strikers	7
NGATA Heremaia	Football Kingz	6
ALMENDRA Patricio	Football Kingz	6
HASSELL Bradley	Perth Glory	6

BYE - SYDNEY UNITED



Viareggio Carnevale 2003



Nathan Foti (Captain)
(Midfielder - No.7)



Gregor Agic
(Central Marker - No.2)



Chris Andrews
(Defender - No.3)



David Blackburn
(Midfielder - No.19)



Moussa Chahine
(Defender - No.15)



Michael Dowling
(Wide Midfielder - No.6)



Luke Femia
(Goalkeeper - No.1)



Sami Yilmaz
(Defender - No.16)

By John Economos

THE A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT TIGERS' Under 20s squad early next month takes off for the second consecutive year to fly to the Tuscan region in Northern Italy to do battle in the tough '55th Viareggio Youth Tournament', Europe's oldest and most prestigious International Youth competition.

Apia has already been drawn in Group 2 of the ten Group totalling 40 teams draw, and has been bracketted to face three tough Italian sides, Napoli, Reggina and Cosenza.

Apia's Youth Team Coach Mark Brady who toured Viareggio last year with Apia's Youth, stated to ABSW:



Dominic Rossi
(Striker - No.9)

"I believe the whole of our squad is seriously looking forward to the great challenge that awaits us all. We will work hard not only for our Club, but for Australia as well.

"This prestigious Viareggio Tournament will not only be exciting, but breath-taking for our boys who will participate with great pride," ended Brady.

John Romeo, A.P.I.A.'s Youth team Technical Director, who also participated at the Tournament last year, evaluated to ABSW: "We have a very young side going this year to Viareggio.

"Hopefully after completing our five planned pre-Tournament

trial matches we've lined up, this young squad will gel quickly. It's an international, high quality Tournament and our aim is for our players to use it as a unique learning crusade."

Mr Tony Raciti, Apia's President, commented: "The Viareggio Tournament is Europe's only prestigious annual Youth international competition. In this Tournament one is able to see the creme de la creme of Youth talent being showcased with their respective club side.

"Every player at this Tournament competes hoping to capture the searching eye of the ever-present lurking talent scouts from some of Europe's big clubs.

"Our aim in participating in this fabulous Tournament is to gain valuable international experience plus hopefully one day we may be able to unearth a player which our Club, and that player, can derive a substantial financial benefit plus a most rewarding professional career," ended Mr Raciti.



A shot from last year's Viareggio Opening Ceremony.



One of the mobile monster towering Floats at last year's Viareggio Carnevale.



Nathan Moulds
(Sweeper - No.4)



Carlo Musumeci
(Left Midfielder - No.11)



Marino Musumeci
(Right Midfielder - No.18)



Murray Nelson
(Goalkeeper - No.22)



Tony Panuccio
(Midfielder - No.17)



Matthew Raciti
(Left Midfielder - No.8)



Rockie Restuccia
(Striker - No.10)



Peter Walker
(Midfielder - No.13)

55TH "TORNEO MONDIALE DI CALCIO 'COPPA CARNEVALE 2003"

YEAR	WINNERS	RUNNER-UP	YEAR	WINNERS	RUNNER-UP
1949	MILAN	Lazio	1976	DUKLA PRAGUE	Milan
1950	SAMPDORIA	Roma	1977	SAMPDORIA	Milan
1951	PARTIZAN	Sampdoria	1978	FIorentina	Roma
1952	MILAN	Partizan	1979	FIorentina	Perugia
1953	MILAN	Juventus	1980	DUKLA PRAGUE	Lazio
1954	LAN. VICENZA	Juventus	1981	ROMA	Ipswich Town
1955	LAN. VICENZA	Sampdoria	1982	FIorentina	Ipswich Town
1956	SPARTAK PRAGA	Milan	1983	ROMA	Inter Milan
1957	MILAN	Roma	1984	TORINO	Napoli
1958	SAMPDORIA	Fiorentina	1985	TORINO	Roma
1959	MILAN	Partizan	1986	INTER MILAN	Sampdoria
1960	MILAN	Dukia Prague	1987	TORINO	Fiorentina
1961	JUVENTUS	Lan. Vicenza	1988	FIorentina	Torino
1962	INTER MILAN	Fiorentina	1989	TORINO	Roma
1963	SAMPDORIA	Bologna	1990	CESENA	Napoli
1964	DUKLA PRAGUE	Bologna	1991	ROMA	Napoli
1965	GENOA	Juventus	1992	FIorentina	Roma
1966	FIorentina	Dukia Prague	1993	ATALANTA	Milan
1967	BOLOGNA	Fiorentina	1994	JUVENTUS	Fiorentina
1968	DUKLA PRAGUE	Juventus	1995	TORINO	Fiorentina
1969	ATALANTA	Napoli	1996	BRESCIA	Parma
1970	DUKLA PRAGUE	Milan	1997	BARI	Torino
1971	INTER MILAN	Milan	1998	TORINO	Iriney
1972	DUKLA PRAGUE	Inter Milan	1999	MILAN	Varteks
1973	FIorentina	Bologna	2000	EMPOLI	Fiorentina
1974	FIorentina	Lazio	2001	MILAN	Vitoria
1975	NAPOLI	Lazio	2002	INTER MILAN	Torino
			2003	??	??



The Colosseum in Rome.



Matthew Lekovski
(Midfielder - No.14)



Leigh Magri
(Midfielder - No.12)



Mark Brady
(Team Coach)



Tony Raciti
(A.P.I.A. President)



John Romeo
(Technical Director)



Robert Younis
(Striker - No.20)



A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Off To Viareggio, Italy



By John Economos

A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT TIGERS' Youth squad this Friday night will stage a Fund-Raising Dinner at the Wests Leagues Club in Ashfield, as the squad prepares for its second consecutive challenge in Italy next month when it participates at the 55th Viareggio Youth Tournament.

The Apia Leichhardt Tigers have pencilled in at least five trial matches in Italy prior to the Tournament kicking off.

The 55th Viareggio Youth Tournament will officially be declared opened on February 17th with a spectacular Opening Ceremony in the main Stadium at Viareggio.

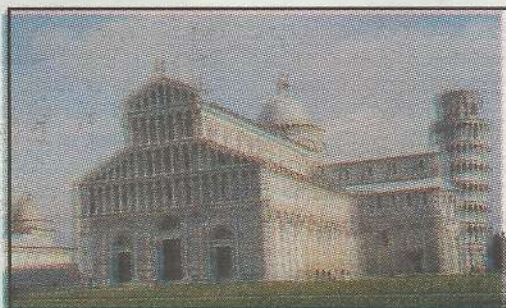
All 40 participating squads will parade into the arena with teams coming in from as far as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Germany, Greece, Holland, Mexico, Spain, Switzerland, USA and Yugoslavia.

The Tournament will culminate into the Final to be played in the main Stadium at Viareggio on March 3rd.

Strangely this year not one single team is participating from the U.K. In past years clubs such as Manchester United, Ipswich Town and Glasgow Rangers have sent squads down to Italy for this glamour Tournament.

Even more strangely, never has a team from Great Britain has been able to win at Viareggio. Only Ipswich Town was able to scramble through to the Final, (twice), losing to eventual Tournament champions, A.S.Roma and Fiorentina in 1981 and '82 respectively.

In the last 54 consecutive years that this fabulous, yet tough Tournament has been



The ancient Santa Maria Cathedral, alongside the Baptistery, with the incredible Leaning Tower far right.

contested only on eight occasions has a non-Italian team been able to win the Final. Former Australian international striker Alistair Edwards has competed at Viareggio three times with Glasgow Rangers' Youth side, whilst former Sydney Olympic sweeper, Kenny Wilson was also there with

Rangers in the mid-70s.

The Apia Youth Squad departs from Sydney on Saturday February 8th, flying out with Singapore Airlines, and returns to Sydney via Milan and Frankfurt on February 24th.

This extremely well-organised tour is not only about Soccer. Whilst in Italy

the Apia squad will take in some very valuable historic sights of Rome, including the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain, the ancient Colosseum, tour the glorious Vatican, and even will be able to go to the Olympic Stadium to watch a Serie A match, Lazio vs Torino (Sunday 9th February).

The team will see the World famous 'Viareggio Carnevale', held annually for the past 100 years which comprises a gigantic parade of monster mobile Floats that meander the waterfront street at Viareggio. These incredible motorised Floats tower 35 metres skyward, unbelievably defying the Laws of Gravity as they slowly snake their way through massive crowds that come from all over Europe

to witness every year this massive, colourful extravaganza.

Whilst based at the splendid coastal and aristocratic city of Viareggio, (two metres above sea-level with a population of barely 112,000), a picturesque township wedged on the North Western shores of the Adriatic Sea of Italy, the Apia Youth squad has planned to visit the magnificent little quiet township of Pisa just 20 kilometres inland to the South. It will be here at Pisa where the Apia Youth players will witness one of the World's Seven Wonders, the Leaning Tower.

Built way back in 1173, the Leaning Tower of Pisa over the years had tilted so badly that it was dangerous-



One of The Wonders of the World The Leaning Tower Of Pisa.

ly now tilting 3.9 metres off the perpendicular, forcing the authorities to close off the entire area in 1990 whilst an 11 year, highly expensive rescue reconstruction, took place.

The mystifying eight storey Tower was ultimately re-opened to the public in June two years ago, following the exhaustive restoration work by an army of foreign engineers. The horrendous restoration costs came to no less than \$46 million to reduce the Tower's perilous 'tilt' by 40.6cms, which English engineers estimate will make this invaluable ancient structure safe for at least 300 years to come.

As if this comprehensive tour to Italy was not enough, the Apia squad will as well visit the magnificent ancient city of Florence. Heavily steeped in culture, fabulous Florence just has to be the most romantic city on the planet.

Just prior to the squad's departure out of Italy, the touring players will visit the World's leading City of Fashion and style, Milan.

A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers Youth Squad 2003



BACK ROW: Joseph Piazza (Media Liaison Officer), Mark Brady (Assistant Coach/Trainer), Peter Walker, Moussa Chahine, Nathan Moulds, David Blackburn, Gregor Agic, Leigh Magri, Robert Younis, Chris Andrews, Sami Yilmaz, Joe Trieste (Manager).

FRONT ROW: Tony Panuccio, Marino Musumeci, Feruccio Hanza, Rockie Restuccia, Murray Nelson, John Romeo (Director of Coaching/Head Coach), Luke Femia, Nathan Foti, Michael Dowling, Matthew Raciti, Carlo Musumeci.

GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
JUVENTUS	NAPOLI	ROMA	BRESCIA	INTER MILAN
PARMA		PAOK SALONIKI	VOJVODINA	BAYERN MUNICH
	REGGINA	(GREECE)	(YUGOSLAVIA)	
FIORENTINA	COSENZA	CITTADELLA	ASCOLI	TERNANA
SANTOS	A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT	CORDOBA	IRINEU	VITORIA
GROUP 6	GROUP 7	GROUP 8	GROUP 9	GROUP 10
MILAN	TORINO	VICENZA	BARI	EMPOLI
LAZIO	SLAVIA PRAHA	OBILIC	GRASSHOPPER	PERUGIA
CATANIA	SALERNITANA	BENEVENTO	BRINDISI	PALERMO
COSTA RICA	NEW YORK	DESP. CAPIXABA	C.N.MARCILIO	PUMAS
UNITED			DIAS	

From The Dressing Sheds

By Mark Stavroulakis

It's high time in Australia's National League and the transfer window will once again open on the 15th of January.

Many clubs will in some-way take part in the transfer process, some buying and some selling players to rival clubs either local or internationally.

A number of clubs have also hinted that the increase of letting players go will also be evident come this week.

There's been no secret that a number of clubs not just in Australia, but worldwide have been affected financially, so the amount of money flowing in for players will not be what it was seen a few years back.

Nonetheless, expect some shocks in our very own National League as players take their places in signing for new clubs in the new-year.

With less than a few weeks until the big clash between England and the Socceroos on Wednesday 12th of February, it's been official that the game has been SOLD OUT.

Upton Park will be packed to the brim and it will be pleasing to note that one of the thousands of supporters present at the game will be representing ABSW.

Richard Kreider (Perth Correspondent) will be making the 10,000-mile trek to England to witness this match and will provide ABSW with reports, details and photos of this exciting friendly encounter.

The Brisbane Strikers are currently travelling through a purple patch of late after attaining credible results in their past couple of matches.

Coach John Kosmina has already dug into the transfer market and from all reports has finalized a Tahitian striker by the name of Felix Tagawa.

It took just over a month to finalize the deal with Felix as the Strikers sought assurance that the exciting prospect was eligible for selection in the years NSL.

Brisbane scouts during the Oceania Nations Cup spotted

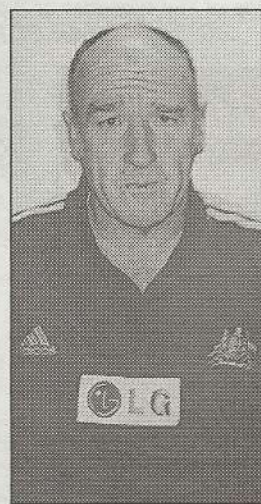
the striker and from all reports will be a player to look out for this season.

Felix becomes the second import player for the Strikers, the first being last year's ABSW Player of the Year Fernando Rech.

After failing to make an impression at Perth Glory, defender Ben Blake put pen to paper until the end of the NSL season by signing with former club the Wollongong Wolves.

Blake signed a three-month deal with the Glory this season however Coach d'Avray failed to utilize the services of Blake opting for defenders such as David Tarka, Jaime Harnwell, Scott Miller and Shane Pryce.

Matters were made even tougher for Ben when news



Jim Fraser: Power Goalkeeper Coach has certainly turned Liam Reddy into a better shot-stopper.

filtered through that ex-Olympic Sharks defender Mark Byrnes was set to join the club in the new-year.

Rumors about Matty Horsley moving back to the 'Gong have also circulated the press however its been pure speculation.

Horsley still has 18-months left on his Glory contract so a move back to his birthplace looks highly unlikely.

Having had well over 150-appearances in the NSL, former Socceroo Sean Babic has certainly been a player in search of some much needed luck.

The striker spent two seasons with the Wolves until the club decided to let him

go last week after injury hampered his move to the top.

Already keen inquires from the Marconi Stallions and Sydney United have already been made but at this stage nothing has been officially stated.

The 26-year-old still has time on his hands and has not ruled out a possible move to an overseas club either this year or next.

Sydney United however have appeared to have led the chase in signing the former Wolves striker.

Spare a thought for Power defender Jack Sobczyk after the rising young star suffered a knee injury (a second in as many years) in the Round 16 clash against the Olympic Sharks.

Having come on as a substitute in the 60th minute, the 23-year-old was carried off from the field five minutes later after his studs were caught on a disastrous Toyota Park pitch.

In an unfair twist of fate the former Spirit defender could face a 12-month layoff thanks to the poor conditions of Toyota Park.

The National League has set high standards for playing on the best pitches in Australia, Toyota was once regarded as being one of them but it now sits as probably the worst ground in the league.

During the Sharks-Power clash, officials entered the surface a number of times with shovels, doing all they could in maintaining the ground's condition.

Surely one must assume that when Rugby League side the Cronulla Sharks hit the ground for the new season, no doubt the pitch will be in pristine condition.

Shark spectators believe that this was the last straw in its move to the Shire area and already rumors have filtered through that a possible move to Leichhardt Oval or Wentworth Park is currently on the cards.

ABSW conducted a recent survey as to how many yellow cards each referee has dished out during the current NSL season.

Con Diomis was the leader of the whistle blowers handing out 51 yellow cards while Eddie Lennie lies in second place with 41 and Craig Zetter in third with 33.

The list is as follows after 16 rounds:

- 1) Con Diomis 59 (11 matches)
- 2) Eddie Lennie 41 (11 matches)
- 3) Craig Zetter 33 (8 matches)
- 4) Angelo Nardi 32 (6 matches)
- 5) Mark Shield 29 (12 matches)
- 6) Matthew Breeze 27 (8 matches)

- 7) Ben Williams 27 (7 matches)
- 8) Perry Mur 25 (9 matches)
- 9) Brett Hugo 19 (6 matches)
- 10) Peter Green 19 (6 matches)
- 11) Derek Rugg 16 (5 matches)
- 12) Simon Micallef 13 (5 matches)
- 13) Greg Leverton 7 (1 match)
- 14) Simon Prydzacz 4 (1 match)

-National League Coaching Casualty #2

Last week the National Soccer League saw its first sacking of the season after Stallions head-man Raul Blanco was given the boot by the club.

Round 14 saw ex-Adelaide City Force coach Charley Villani resign from his post at the club putting Zoran Matic at the helm.

Stallions new coach Rale Rasic (the clubs football manager) has taken over the reigns at Marconi, and with the club currently languishing at the foot of the ladder, Rasic certainly has his work cutout as he tries to steer the side away from the dreaded wooden spoon this season.

One shot-stopper has certainly turned the corner since his unlawful incident that saw the custodian KO ex-Sharks defender Mark Byrnes on the floor.

Power's Liam Reddy has been in terrific form of late, producing world-class saves alerting everyone to his attention that he is a keeper for the future.

Power goalkeeping coach Jim Fraser has had a lot of say in Reddy's progress towards the top with the former '74 Socceroo giving the youngster some great tips under the sticks.

Another graduate that has come through the ranks of 'good old Jim' has been Olympic Sharks custodian Clint Bolton.

Whilst his time at the Sharks, Fraser trained Clint and has had a say in the former Striker's profile as being one of the best keepers in the country.

At the moment, Fraser is also teaching young Danny Vukovic the tricks of the trade as the Power number two also looks the goods in becoming another good up and coming shot-stopper.

Force veteran Aurelio Vidmar notched up his 250th NSL match last week against the Power in Sydney.

The former Socceroo has had a wonderful soccer career both here and abroad and no doubt the 35-year-old has at least a good year or two to fulfill the 300 milestone.

Well done 'Viddy'.

-Look out National

League a stern message has been sent by John Kosmina, 'The Strikers Are Coming'.

Kossie's men simply out-classed last year's Grand-Final winners the Sharks three-nil condemning them to second spot on the NSL ladder.

Brisbane were trailing at the foot off the ladder for the majority of the NSL season.

Now the tides have turned and Brisbane sits in seventh position on equal points with the Force and Power who sit in fifth and sixth position respectively.

Good news has finally hit young promising Spirit striker Dylan MacAllister after the former U20 international was given the all clear to play in this week's match against Sydney United.

His transfer saga with Swiss side FC Aarau has finally come to an end with coach Lawrie McKinna hoping that the former Olympic Sharks striker will hit the target a number of times this year as the club hope to move off the foot of the ladder.

Should the warning signs sail around Toyota Park?

The Olympic Sharks have now lost two matches in a row, the latest being a three-nil loss to the Brisbane Strikers in Ballymore last week.

An emergency meeting was supposedly called upon for all players after the match hoping that their mid-season slump will cease sooner rather than later.

The Glory have capitalized on the Sharks two losses taking a two point advan-

tage however if SA have their way and Perth are found guilty of fielding an unregistered player, then Olympic could re-take the lead once more.

Newcastle United coach Ian Crook was one brave man last week after his side lost to a first minute strike by Glory striker Nick Mrdja.

Knowing that a goal was needed by his squad to at least gain a point against the now new leaders Perth, 'Crookie' threw young 17-year-old AIS graduate Jobe Wheelhouse into the mix for a hopeful goal.

It did not eventuate however throwing the promising young attacking midfielder into the match has certainly

Brisbane Strikers and the Olympic Sharks have all introduced a number of newcomers to the NSL.

ABSW's roving eye in Melbourne stated that the Northern Spirit lads had a good night out last Sunday night after their one-nil loss to South Melbourne at the infamous 'Heat' nightclub.

No doubt the players were trying to unwind after the match that could have gone anyone's way however South's favourite son Billy Damianos stole the show with a sole goal to gift the Melbourne side three valuable points.

Special mention must go to South Melbourne's fan

ROUND 18	
17-1-03	Adelaide City Force - Brisbane Strikers
	Northern Spirit - Sydney United
18-1-03	Perth Glory - South Melbourne
19-1-03	Melbourne Knights - Parramatta Power
	Wollongong Wolves - Newcastle United
	Olympic Sharks - Football Kingz
Bye - Marconi Stallions	

indicated to many observers that the former Norwich man believes in youth and believes that these players are the club's future.

Many clubs have turned to youth this season, notable clubs like Northern Spirit, Newcastle, South Melbourne,

favourite Billy 'the kid' Damianos for his 100th appearance for the club last week. The attacking midfielder celebrated his milestone with the game's only goal in the fifth minute that gifted his squad the three valuable points hoisting them to third

YOUNG MAGPIE FLIES MORE THAN 10,000 MILES TO MEET HIS HEROES

Everyone knows Newcastle United has some of the most dedicated fans in the world.

But how many have travelled from the other side of the planet to see the team play at St James' Park?

Young Bill Benton lives in Sydney, Australia, but that does not stop him being a dedicated NUFC fan. His greatest wish is to be a mascot at a home match and so his dad Nigel contacted club sponsors NTL to ask if there was any chance of making Bill's dream come true.

NTL selects a mascot for each home match and sponsorship manager James Kirkpatrick said he was thrilled to be able to fulfil seven-year-old Bill's wishes.

Bill and his family are leaving the Sydney sunshine behind them to travel to the UK in time for Bill to be mascot at the home match against Fulham on December 21.

After the match the family will travel to the south west to spend Christmas with relatives, but the highlight of the trip for Bill will be the moment he leads his heroes out onto the pitch at St James' Park in front of 52,000 fans.

Dad Nigel said: "Bill is ecstatic at the thought of being a mascot and meeting the players. He is a real Newcastle United fan and wears his kit whenever he can."

Bill added: "Newcastle is the best team in the world. I'm really excited about being a mascot and can't wait to see them play."

And United manager, Sir Bobby Robson commented:

"It will be terrific for Bill to join us for the Fulham match and lead the team out alongside Alan Shearer. It was lovely to hear of Bill's passion for the team, coming from so far afield, and I hope we can make it a day to remember for him."



10,000 miles to see his beloved Newcastle United: Bill Benton shown leading Newcastle out against Fulham.



SOCCER NSW



	St George Saints	0
	Blacktown City Demons	2

By Greg Stock

Blacktown flexed a little of their footballing muscle, picking up three points and disposing of a plucky St George 2-0 in trying conditions on Sunday night.

Without the services of key defenders Damien Foxe and Dane Hokin the Demons did enough at vital stages in the match to secure the win by virtue of two set pieces and some slack marking on behalf of the Saints defenders.

It was a scrappy match that was short on highlights until midfielder Steven Riches got on the end of a corner to bury his header in heavy traffic past a stranded Michael Xuereb, four minutes shy of the break. His ability to shed his marker a sign of things to come for

the Saints who again conceded the second goal in similar circumstances, Dion Valle able to latch onto a well taken free kick by Kain Rastall with a driving header. For the second time of the night, Valle was able to easily rid himself of his marker and put away an uncontested header, that in the overall scheme of things really should not have been allowed to happen.

In the blustery conditions neither side was really able to dominate and it was a testament to the resolve of the Blacktown squad that they were able to find the inspiration for their two goals. Well held by a hard running Saints defence for most of the night, their match was short on highlights with only David Reid who hit the post and the crossbar with efforts able to give their fans much to cheer about.

For the home side they did miss a couple



Dion Valle was a difficult man for the Saints to contain.

of one on ones which ultimately cost them any chance with coach Manny Spanoudakis conceding they really need to make the most of these opportunities.

The proposed partnership of Abbas Saad and Bruno Beddoni on the St. George forward line did not eventuate, with Beddoni starting from the bench, after he was dropped for disciplinary reasons. He did get an opportunity for the second half, replacing an injured Saad at the break, but even he had a forgettable evening blanketed by Pat Gatt.

The standout performer for the home side was undoubtedly Archie Markopoulos who really put in a solid contribution till replaced late in the game.

ST GEORGE SAINTS 0
BLACKTOWN CITY DEMONS 2
(Steven Riches 41', Dion Valle 86')
at St George Stadium, Rockdale

ST. GEORGE: Michael Xuereb, Jose Mendes, Sebastian Sinozic, Simon Verrender, Ali Salim, George Maglis, Evangelos Petratos, Max Sevares, Achilleas Markopoulos (Ali Chahine), Abbas Saad (Bruno Beddoni), Jason Lal.
Coach: Manny Spanoudakis

BLACKTOWN CITY: John Crawley, Ben Willard, Patrick Gatt, Dion Valle, Steven Riches, Naoki Imaiya (Bischara Stefan), Jimmy Nikas (Brian Venega), Kain Rastall, Simon Catanzaro, David Reid, Luke Roodenberg.
Coach: Brian Brown.

Referee: Ray Issac
Assistant Referees: Nick Asargiotis and Keith Anderson.
Fourth Official: Leo Romero

	Parramatta Eagles	1
	Bonnyrigg White Eagles	1

By Paul Goodwin

Bonnyrigg coach Ljube Jancev named an unchanged side for his club's visit to Melita Stadium and had a game plan worked out before the teams did battle.

His opposite number, John Calleja, coming off a solid 4-0 win the week before, had to decide who to leave out after his strikers suddenly gave him that headache, following that sound win.

In the end the problem was who to bring on instead, as neither of the players who had done so well the previous week could break through a stubborn Bonnyrigg defence.

Bonnyrigg looked back to their best and despite an early scare when Daniel Kukucka got through to face Fernando Greco inside the first minute and failed to finish, it was

mostly Bonnyrigg who called the shots.

Latest signing Aaron Burgess had another strong game and got through to commit Jason Holmes to the save in the 25th minute, a parry to the feet of oncoming striker Kindness Agwu, whose chance to pounce was denied by a great saving tackle from Eagles' defender Paul O'Grady.

The challenge, however, caused the African striker to turn badly on his ankle and Joe Bruni had to make an early appearance in his place.

Bruni looked good too, but was surprisingly replaced by defender Oygur Askin right near the end as the visitors decided a point would be enough from an encounter that they at various stages looked like winning.

They were taken by surprise, however, in the last seconds of the first half when a decoy run by Mark Reveley and the effects



Bonnyrigg coach Ljube Jancev was satisfied with the draw.

of the direct sun caused keeper Greco to misjudge a free kick from a tight angle, lofted in by Ben Delicata, one of the Eagles best on the day.

The ball found the net to send the home side supporters off for a very happy half time break.

The second half was only 45 seconds old when Burgess struck back for Bonnyrigg. Intercepting a bad back pass and running fully 30 yards at Holmes, he skilfully placed the ball under the keeper's body for a well deserved equaliser. Defences got on top in a game where both needed to be at their best to keep the scores unchanged.

Both coaches indicated their satisfaction with the result, as the two sides are clearly premiership material once more after slow starts by both and while John Calleja and Ljube Jancev both felt that Bonnyrigg had enjoyed around 60 per cent of the play, they also agreed that a draw was a reasonable outcome in such a tense and important game.

PARRAMATTA EAGLES 1
(B Delicata 45')
BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES 1
(A Burgess 46')
at Melita Stadium, South Granville

PARRAMATTA EAGLES: 1 Jason Holmes (C), 2 Michael Kladis, 5 Mark Reveley, 4 Malcolm Meliak (3 Geoff Dwyer 70), 18 Paul O'Grady, 6 Daniel Borg (9 Anthony Mondello 70), 10 Anthony Mittiga, 11 Matt O'Shea, 15 Ben Delicata, 8 Daniel Kukucka (17 Adam Anderson 85) 14 Nathan Rivera.
Subs not used: 22 Liam Curran (RGK), 7 Mauricio Islas.

Coach: John Calleja
BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES: 1 Fernando Greco, 3 Mark D'Alessandro, 18 Fernando Pellegrino, 17 Miki Simonovic, 5 Teyun Devrimol (C), 23 Devrim Huseyin, 7 Javier Mancino (6 Johnny Ghiso 75), 8 David Harding, 9 Shane Knight, 10 Kindness Agwu (11 Joe Bruni 25, 15 Oygur Askin 88), 21 Aaron Burgess.
Subs not used: Alex Augusto (RGK), 12 Zarko Glavas.

Coach: Ljube Jancev
Referee: Vic Gauci
Assistant Referee: Gerard Parsons and Steve Buckitt
Fourth Official: David Finlay
Yellow Cards: Parramatta: Nil; Bonnyrigg: 3 Mark D'Alessandro 70

FROM THE SIDELINES By Greg Stock

*A couple of new additions to the Premier League ranks in the form of two new bouncing baby boys. Panthers midfielder Shane Hammond and his wife Bridget are celebrating the birth of Tristian Shane, while A.P.I.A. striker Steve Karavatakis and his wife Evonne also had a boy, Nicholas.

Panthers coach Tony Rasmussen did the right thing in pulling Shane from the team against Canterbury-Marrickville a couple of weekends ago given little Tristian came into the world early on Sunday the 6th. No such problem for the veteran dad 'Kara' whose wife Evonne timed the new arrival to perfection giving birth midweek in the space of just six hours! Congratulations to both families from all Premier League fans!

*Speaking of things Penrith, former Macarthur Rams coach Hugh McCrory

was on hand at Andrews Road on Saturday night to watch the first grade debut on son Michael as strike partner for the livewire Rod Hutchinson. McCrory junior had an excellent game though his partner Hutchinson didn't fare too well, taking an early knock and having to be replaced. McCrory senior it appears is no longer in charge of the Rams, a decision on his replacement is expected soon.

*New Lions midfielder Fernando De Los Santos was given no special treatment in his match up against the hard running Panthers engine room.

A recent signing from Uruguayan club Penarol, he did provide a couple of nice balls for his strikers and once he settles in properly, should provide plenty of interest.

Bankstown were without three of their best on Saturday night with Glenn

Moore, Ralph Boye and Todd McManus all unavailable for coach George Fernandez.

*A.P.I.A. midfielder Damon Langan has had a frustrating christmas period sidelined through suspension after his clash with St George striker Orhan Dincer. Having looked forward all season to playing his old side Blacktown, Langan watched on from the sidelines as A.P.I.A. took apart the Demons by a score of 3-1.

One player who was sporting a grin from ear to ear was Paul Dee who had a whale of a game against his old club. Congratulations are also in order for A.P.I.A.'s Sam Larocca who celebrated his 25th birthday with a surprise party organised by his girlfriend after the match.

*Penrith player and officials got

together just before Christmas to farewell Peter Bennett who has just left to start preseason training with Singapore club side Geyland United. Bennett is the first signing for new Geyland coach Scott O'Donnell and promises he will be back at Andrews Road for season 2003/4!

*Berries Assistant Coach Stan Ackerley is in for a busy season as he starts his preseason work as head coach with First Division outfit Schofield Scorpions. With both team training two nights a week, he definitely won't have a spare evening to scratch himself!

The recent Hall of Fame inductee is quick to point out that he will still be seeing out his role with Canterbury as Greg Woodhouse's offside.

*Saints were somewhat disappointed on Sunday night with the partnership of

Abbas Saad and Bruno Beddoni scuttled for this week. Coach Manny Spanoudakis was forced to bench Beddoni after he turned up late for the match, leaving Saad to start with Jason Lal. Unfortunately a lower back problem with Abbas forced his replacement at half-time, but he should be right for the Saints next appointment with the highflying Coasties next Saturday night.

*Speaking of things St George, defender Sebastian Sinozic leaves for the United States and trials with MLS club Los Angeles Galaxy this Saturday.

Midfielder Ali Salim, who we mentioned was taken to hospital last week for a neck injury, played a full game against Blacktown City on Sunday. The trip to hospital was merely precautionary with just plain old bruising as the diagnosis.



SOCCER NSW



ROUND 7 RESULTS

FIRST GRADE

Belconnen Blue Devils3 (M Perinovic 13/15/21')	Penrith Panthers2 (D McCann 8', D Hinton 43')	Fairfield Bulls1 (M Borg 49')
Rockdale City Suns3 (B Deighan 45', S Najdoski 48', R Todorovski 54')	Bankstown City Lions0	C/bury-M/ville Olympic2 (A. Amegashie 79', L Gunn 22')
A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers5 (Z Arambasic 23'/52'/80', S Karavatakis 85', K Foster 94')	St George Saints0	Parramatta Eagles1 (B Delicata 45')
Central Coast Coasties1 (J Maguire 57')	Blacktown City Demons2 (S Riches 41', D Valle 86')	Bonnyrigg White Eagles1 (A Burgess 46')

UNDER 19

Belconnen Blue Devils0	Penrith Panthers3 (G Dowling 16', C Lima 42', M Noro 74')	Fairfield Bulls1 (A Azzopardi)
Rockdale City Suns3 (J Velegrinis 46/66', C Srbnovski 87')	Bankstown City Lions0	C/bury-M/ville Olympic3 (M Mikhail 10', A Uccino 63', W Hijazi 84')
A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers1 (R Restuccia 39')	St George Saints0	Parramatta Eagles3 (T Gledhill 30'/56', M Debono 44')
Central Coast Coasties1 (M Mitchell 35')	Blacktown City Demons4 (D Storey 47'/64', M Wood 80', P Hatshorn 94')	Bonnyrigg White Eagles? (N Zonjic 60' (pen))

FIRST GRADE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	7	5	2	0	17	6	17
Central Coast Coasties	7	4	2	1	11	8	14
C/bury M/ville Olympic	7	3	3	1	9	7	12
Rockdale City Suns	7	3	2	2	14	12	11
Blacktown City Demons	7	3	2	2	10	9	11
Parramatta Eagles	7	2	4	1	8	4	10
Penrith Panthers	7	2	3	2	10	8	9
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	7	2	2	3	9	10	8
Belconnen Blue Devils	7	1	4	2	9	10	7
St George Saints	7	2	0	5	6	13	6
Fairfield Bulls	7	1	1	5	8	16	4
Bankstown City Lions	7	1	1	5	5	13	4

UNDER 19

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blacktown City Demons	7	6	1	0	29	6	19
Parramatta Eagles	7	5	2	0	17	6	17
Rockdale City Suns	7	5	1	1	16	9	16
Penrith Panthers	7	4	1	2	13	7	13
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	7	4	1	2	14	10	13
C/bury M/ville Olympic	7	3	1	3	18	13	10
Belconnen Blue Devils	7	2	3	2	9	10	9
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	7	2	1	4	7	12	7
Central Coast Coasties	7	0	4	3	5	15	4
St George Saints	7	1	1	5	4	14	4
Bankstown City Lions	7	0	3	4	6	19	3
Fairfield Bulls	7	0	1	6	5	22	1

NEXT ROUND

ROUND 8 FIRST GRADE

HOME TEAM	AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	v Penrith Panthers	Sat 18 Jan	7.00pm	Serbian Centre
Central Coast Coasties	v St George Saints	Sat 18 Jan	7.00pm	Pluim Park
Blacktown City Demons	v Parramatta Eagles	Sat 18 Jan	7.00pm	Gabbie Stadium
Rockdale City Suns	v A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	Sat 18 Jan	7.00pm	John Crehan Park
C/bury-M/ville Olympic	v Belconnen Blue Devils	Sat 18 Jan	7.00pm	Henson Park
Bankstown City Lions	v Fairfield Bulls	Sun 19 Jan	6.00pm	Jensen Park

UNDER 19

HOME TEAM	AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	v Penrith Panthers	Sat 18 Jan	5.00pm	Serbian Centre
Central Coast Coasties	v St George Saints	Sat 18 Jan	5.00pm	Pluim Park
Blacktown City Demons	v Parramatta Eagles	Sat 18 Jan	5.00pm	Gabbie Stadium
Rockdale City Suns	v A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	Sat 18 Jan	5.00pm	John Crehan Park
C/bury-M/ville Olympic	v Belconnen Blue Devils	Sat 18 Jan	5.00pm	Henson Park
Bankstown City Lions	v Fairfield Bulls	Sun 19 Jan	4.00pm	Jensen Park

TOP GOALSCORERS

- 7 — Zlatko Arambasic (A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers)
- 5 — Spase Najdoski (Rockdale City Suns)
- 4 — Marko Perinovic (Belconnen Blue Devils)
- 4 — Luke Roodenberg (Blacktown City), James Monie (Central Coast)
- 3 — Rod Hutchinson (Penrith Panthers), Ante Moric (A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers), Robert Todorovski (Rockdale City Suns), Matthew Borg (Fairfield Bulls), Aaron Burgess (Bonnyrigg White Eagles),
- 2 — Paul Bourke (Canterbury-Marrickville), Steve Karavatakis (A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers), Shane Knight (Bonnyrigg White Eagles), Allan Picken (Canterbury-Marrickville Olympic), Colin Luff (Bankstown City Lions), Marc Hoenselaars (Fairfield Bulls), Simon Catanzaro (Blacktown City Demons), Clinton Larfield (Belconnen Blue Devils), Nathan Rivera (Parramatta Eagles),

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NSW PREMIER LEAGUE SEASON 2002/2003

MATCH OF THE ROUND

 A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	5
 Central Coast Coasties	1

By Paul Goodwin

The match of the round between first and second at Lambert Park was always going to be a battle of attrition; or so many thought.

Central Coast arrived determined to show their true credentials, but almost from the start they appeared overawed and allowed the multi-talented A.P.I.A. side to run at them.

They were soon pinned in their own half and after many chances had already been created and a Zlatko Arambasic headed goal had been disallowed,

A.P.I.A. then took the lead in almost identical fashion.

Paul Dee in the 21st minute put over a deep cross and Arambasic placed his header to perfection at the far post for a 1-0 lead.

Arambasic and his striking partner Steve Karavataakis were both working well together, but without much finesse in front of goal as the first half drew to a close.

Then, upon the resumption, Coasties began to show more self belief and ventured forward more readily, looking much more like the side that had shared or held top spot for so long.

They almost equalised in the 50th minute when John Monie just failed to reach a telling cross from the right by Josh Maguire.

Two minutes later at the other end Karavataakis did well to get to the left byline, draw the keeper and then chip the ball back to the far post for an easy header right under the crossbar by Arambasic. That gave the home side a nice two goal cushion, but that was short lived.

The Coasties responded themselves with a goal out of the blue by Maguire.

His firmly struck free kick from the edge of the box appeared to deceive A.P.I.A. custodian Bob Catlin, who seemed to simply watch the ball go past him and into the net.

It was revealed afterwards, however, that the shot had deflected off defender Marcus Stergiopoulos and in the process completely wrong-footed the keeper.

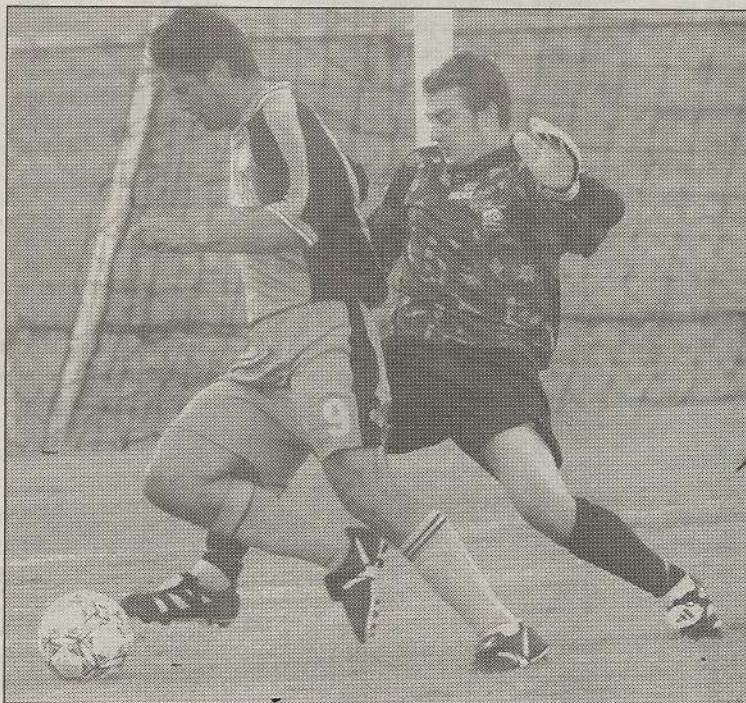
With the Coasties continuing to look for goals and making a good fist of it really, as they stretched the home defence, gaps began to appear for A.P.I.A. and three further goals ensued.

In the 80th Arambasic claimed his hat trick when he accepted a nice cross from the left by Ryan Jones and steadied before placing his shot firmly past Ben Xerri.

The move had been a nice one involving several players and really stretched the Coasties defence Arambasic returned the favour to Karavataakis who had been supplying his passes all day by putting one on a plate in the 85th minute for a virtual tap-in.

Finally, after being ruled offside when about to score his side's fifth late, substitute Kelvin Foster wrapped up the scoring with an easy finish after James Stubbs-Mills and Ryan Jones had combined with efforts that were beaten away.

Catlin got down well to deny Monie twice in quick succession right at the end to keep the score at 5-1 and put A.P.I.A. ahead of the chasing pack, led by The Coasties, by three points.



Hat-trick hero, Zlatko Arambasic, rounds Coasties goalkeeper Ben Xerri.

A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT TIGERS5

(Z Arambasic 23/52/80, S Karavataakis 85, K Foster 94)

CENTRAL COAST COASTIES1

(J Maguire 57)

at Lambert Park, Leichhardt

A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT TIGERS: 1 Bob Catlin, 19 Andrew Clark, 5 Michael Galluzzo, 17 Paul Dee, 3 Josip Moric (4 Ross Kethel 85), 5 Marcus Stergiopoulos (C), 8 James Stubbs-Mills, 18 Ante Moric (11 Ryan Jones 75), 7 Sam La Rocca, 9 Zlatko Arambasic, 10 Steve Karavataakis (2 Kelvin Foster)

Sub not used: 20 Murray Nelson (RGK)

Coach: Les De Celis

CENTRAL COAST COASTIES: 20 Ben Xerri, 3 David Brewer, 19 Sean Matthews, 4 Mitchell Cook, 6 Aron Binskin, 14 Chris Fleming, 5 Liam Cameron (10 Marc Faizon 61), 11 Tom Quilty (7 Peter Preston 61), 17 Pat Bradley (C), 13 James Monie, 2 Josh Maguire

Sub not used: 1 Andrew Goldman (RGK), 18 Nathan Byrn, 8 Daniel Surridge

Coach: John McLafferty

Referee: Alex Spiroski

Assistant Referees: Ken Sharp and Danny Adamopoulos

Fourth Official: Sandro Pertacarini

Yellow Cards: A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers: Ante Moric 45, Michael Galluzzo 83; Central Coast: Sean Matthews 32



Ante Moric with a scything slide tackle on the Coasties Liam Cameron.

SOCCER NSW

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SOCCER NSW



	Belconnen Blue Devils	3
	Rockdale City Suns	3

By Graham Cooke

With this result Belconnen Blue Devils completed a year without a loss at home in the NSW Premier League, but it was not a statistic that coach Lino Fiorese wanted to dwell on.

Instead he was much more concerned with the one win and now four draws from the first seven games – a record that is going to keep the club far short of a place in the finals.

"We have got to tighten up at the back, and remind ourselves how to win," he said afterwards.

Most galling for Fiorese and the home fans was the way the two extra points slipped away. Belconnen were 3-0 up after 21 minutes and held that lead until just before half time.

The architect of Rockdale's early misery was veteran striker Marko Perinovic. With

13 minutes gone the ball was only half-cleared out of the Rockdale defence, David Arranz sent a speculative lob back into the penalty area which Peco Trajceviski looked to have covered until a back-heel deflection from the veteran striker sent it trickling past the goalkeeper.

Two minutes later it was Perinovic in more traditional mode, a signature header off Stephen Kemp's free kick from close range to make it 2-0, then another headed goal after good lead-up work from Michael Katz and Andy Rakic.

The Devils' dreams of a comfortable half-time lead were shattered in the four minutes before the interval. Former Canberra Deakin player Ben Deighan caught defenders sleeping and marked his return to the national capital with a well-taken goal.

Then, deep into stoppage time, Kemp received his second yellow card and marching orders from referee Ned Sparkes, and from the free kick Spase Najdoski curled a shot out of the reach of Anthony Giannasca.



Marko Perinovic celebrating a goal during his first half hat-trick.

Playing against 10 men and just a goal down, the Suns sensed that something could be salvaged from the game, and they completed the job with a strike by Robert Todorovski eight minutes into the half with the Devils defenders appealing fruitlessly for offside.

Suns coach Bill Pilovski said his team had shown great character to claw back three goals and could have won it in the second half.

However, like Fiorese, he had a statistic that did not please him. "I have been coming to Canberra as a player since 1979 and as a coach since 1992, and I am still waiting for my first win," he said.

BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS .3
(M. Perinovic 13', 15', 21')
ROCKDALE CITY SUNS3
B. Deighan 44', S. Najdoski 45', R. Todorovski 53'
at McKellar Soccer Centre, McKellar

BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS: 1 Anthony Giannasca, 2 Adrian Dowling, 4 Lee Pietrukowski, 7 Michael Katz, 8 Elliott Zwangobani, 10 Daniel Macgr (9 Clinton Larfield 64), 11 David Arranz (6 Jaime Mauro 70), 13 Stewart Camara (5 Oscar Zamora 60), 14 Marko Perinovic, 17 Stephen Kemp (sent off 45), 18 Andy Rakic.
Coach: Lino Fiorese

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS: 1 Peco Trajceviski, 3 Ghenadie Costiuc, 4 Richard Plesa, 6 David Brickell (17 Rywot Ju Hong 25), 7 Peter Apoleviski, 8 Ben Deighan, 9 Spase Najdoski, 10 Denis Allovic (2 Eddie Wong 75), 13 Robert Todorovski, 15 Malcolm Bideau, 18 Steven Dimitrievski.
Coach: Bill Pilovski
Referee: Ned Sparkes
Yellow Cards: Belconnen, David Arranz 11, Stephen Kemp 40, 45, Marko Perinovic 56.
Red Card: Belconnen, Stephen Kemp 45
Crowd: 329.

	Penrith Panthers	2
	Bankstown City Lions	0

By Paul Goodwin

There are no two ways about it. This Penrith side has learned a lot from being in the Premier League these past two seasons and they are now a team very much to be feared by anyone they play.

Usually Bankstown City Lions would start favourite in games like this, but that was never the case last Saturday night.

Bankstown found, to their dismay, that a tough-tackling, non-stop running side like the Panthers were just impossible to break down, and ended up leaving Andrews Road Field with their collective tails between their legs after a 2-0 defeat.

There was no fluke about it either.

Penrith were able to dictate the pattern of the game from the kick-off, delayed by referee Craig Pearce for ten minutes due to irregularities with the goal nets.

As things turned out it was just as well the

official was eagle-eyed, as one incident later in the game could have proven embarrassing, had a ball tipped over the bar by the agile Zlatko Josevski fallen inside the back netting and been disputed as a goal by the locals.

By that stage, however, the Panthers were already two up and pressing strongly for a third.

Some good saves by the erratic Josevski denied them that, the keeper saving well from a looping header by Danny Hinton and later Bryan Raeburn needing to boot off the line, after a third shot in rapid succession from Daniel McCann had ensued once the keeper had first effected two point-blank saves.

McCann had already made his indelible mark on the game by the 8th minute.

Jason Sciberras skipped away down the right and pushed the ball past his marker before collecting it at the byline.

He whipped over a first-time cross that eluded Rod Hutchinson in the centre and a

bunch of defenders, but not McCann, who lashed a fierce drive into the roof of the net from 12 yards out.

McCann had already set up Sciberras for a good chance in the third minute only for Josevski, in for the out of touch Josevski, to save brilliantly.

Bankstown's best effort came from



Daniel McCann left an indelible mark on the game.

Damien Luksic, whose rasping shot from distance in the 25th, after some nice work by Chris Bradley and Robbie Gomez, brought out the best in Chad Taylor in the Penrith goal.

When debut maker Michael McCrory ran onto a good ball from Sciberras in the 42nd and looked set to score, he came down under the challenge of Richard Luksic, bringing the yellow card and a free kick for the Panthers at the edge of the box.

The nicely-flighted kick from Shane Hammond found Hinton racing through to head home smartly for a 2-0 half time lead.

Hinton had replaced the injured Hutchinson, while late in the game veteran Osvaldo El Ali had to be helped off after playing the last half hour off the bench and coming in for a lot of heavy attention from the Lions' defence.

The second half saw Bankstown replace Norman Tome with Colin Luff, but little changed for the visitors, whose new recruit, Fernando de los Santos was unable to put any real stamp on the game, having moved in from Penarol a week or so before the game.

A thoroughly workmanlike performance by the home side saw them further improve their position on the ladder and in the process consign Bankstown to the cellar for yet another week.

PENRITH PANTHERS2
(D. McCann 8', D. Hinton 43')
BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS . . .0
at Andrews Road Field, Penrith

PENRITH PANTHERS: 1 Chad Taylor, 26 Marty McCaffery, 7 David Gardiner, 6 Daniel Wells, 17 Daniel McCann, 21 Luke Boyd, 11 Luke O'Connell (C), 10 Shane Hammond, 13 Jason Sciberras (15 Chad Lewis 73), 9 Rod Hutchinson (19 Danny Hinton 37), 29 Michael McCrory (20 Osvaldo El Ali 60)
Subs not used: 24 Kurt Van Arkel RGK, 35 Tim O'Connell.
Coach: Tony Rassmussen

BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS: 1 Zlatko Josevski, 4 Bryan Raeburn, 7 Richard Luksic (C), 11 Rod Madigan (12 Robert Issa 74), 16 Damien Luksic, 17 Chris Bradley, 18 Fernando de los Santos, 14 George Issa, 15 Alex Trpovski (19 Stephan Soleski 49), 7 Norman Tome (9 Colin Luff 46), 13 Robert Gomez.
Sub not used: 22 Bradley Swancott (RGK), 21 Maurice Aliberti.
Coach: George Fernandez
Referee: Craig Pearce
Assistant Referees: Sunny Afshar and Michael Johnson
Fourth Official: Ernie Horvath
Yellow Cards: Penrith Panthers: Luke O'Connell 21, Michael McCrory 64; Bankstown City: Rod Madigan 36, Richard Luksic 42, Bryan Raeburn 71

	Fairfield Bulls	1
	C/bury-M/ville Olympic	2

By Greg Stock

The future of Bulls coach Craig Sharpley hangs in the balance after his side posted their fifth defeat in seven outings, this time beaten 2-1 by Canterbury.

Preferring not to be drawn on the issue at his post match interview, with just one win and a draw from seven starts, Sharpley faces an uncertain future, which could be decided as early as this week in a meeting with the Bulls football committee.

The speculation over the Bulls largely overshadowed the plucky Berries win, one which was built on some rock solid defence from a new look Canterbury backline. With coach Greg Woodhouse electing to start Tom Maric for the first time this season, the move paid off handsomely with the former Sydney United stopper blotting out the influential Marc Hoenselaars in a solid display. Aably assisted by Cormack Begley and Sasa

Utjesenovic, they made just one error all night, allowing Mathew Borg to slip onto a Jason Connolly free kick for the Bulls only goal of the game.

At the other end the lively combination of Leigh Gunn and Aheleas Kotsopoulos kept fans of either persuasion on the edge of their seats, with both players using their speed to target the Bulls less mobile defenders.

Gunn picked up his sides first goal after 15 minutes when he put himself on the end of a short cross from Kotsopoulos, stumbling over the ball but getting enough on the end of it to send it sailing into an empty net. The second goal came after substitute Shane Cevenini was able to get behind the defence and send in an inch perfect cross to the back post from the right hand touchline.

Waiting there in eager anticipation was former Liberian striker Andy Amegashie who buried his header with precision.

In between times the game ebbed and flowed with the Bulls finding space down flanks and regular intervals. Stewart Van



Stewart Van Bentum was one of the best for the Bulls.

Bentum and Adam Snyder were clearly the best two on the park for the homeside launching raid after raid, the only problem was finding a recipient in the centre with both Hoenselaars and makeshift striker Luke Tomich well held for the majority.

The goal to Mathew Borg with his first touch of the game sparked the home side for a second effort but sadly for Sharpley and his team, some slack defending which allowed Cevenini to sneak space and Amegashie to have a free header at the back post, proved their undoing.

It's going to be a long week at training for the Bulls who are now sharing the bottom of the ladder with their round eight opponents Bankstown City Lions. It never a good sign when things go wrong off the field with massive changes in the Fairfield boardroom. Hopefully this won't be reflected on the field.

FAIRFIELD BULLS1
(M Borg 48')
C/BURY-M/VILLE OLYMPIC .2
(Gunn 15', Amegashie 78')
at Nineveh Field, Edensor Park

FAIRFIELD BULLS: 22.Darren Moore, 2.Adam Snyder, 4.Sefer Yildiz, 6.Arthur Diles (10.Mathew Borg 48'), 8.Stewart van Bentum, 9.Marc Hoenselaars, 19.Jason Connolly, 3.Mitchell Daley, 21.Luke Tomich (14.Ismael Arrarte 74'), 12.Ben Green, 7.Sam Gewargis.
Coach: Craig Sharpley.

CANTERBURY-MARRCKVILLE OLYMPIC: 1.Ivan Nacevski, 2.Sasa Utjesenovic, 4.Cormack Begley, 5.Tom Maric, 6.Paul Bourke, 9.Leigh Gunn (8.Shane Cevenini 69'), 10.Alan Picken, 11.Aheleas Kotsopoulos (14.Andy Amegashie 65'), 13.Ben Price, 15.Michael O'Riley, 18.John Kyriakopoulos.
Coach: Greg Woodhouse.
Yellow Card: Paul Bourke (CMO) 16'

Referee: Wayne Crabb
Assistant Referees: Kurt Ams and Atola Stibinger
Fourth Official: Brian Seymour



SOCCER NSW



ROUND 8 PREVIEW



Bankstown City Lions vs Fairfield Bulls



Sunday 19th January, 2003 — 6.00pm
JENSEN PARK, SEFTON

The tide may be turning for Bankstown at last thanks to the arrival of former Penarth and Uruguay international Fernando Santos at the club.

Fairfield have been having a lean trot and blame a lack of preparation and a long injury list for their woes, but the Lions have suffered both themselves in similar fashion.

The likelihood of a Bulls victory here at Jensen Park hinges on how well disciplined the side can be for the full duration of the match.

Glenn Spod has added stability to the midfield since his return from duty in the fire service and the firing

ability of both Hoenselaars and Borg will depend as much on the supply from deep as from the midfield since both these long time Bulls' assets are speed merchants who work together with an uncanny understanding.

Bankstown were at Penrith last Saturday night seeking their first away win of the campaign, but it didn't go their way at all.

Coach George Fernandez did say it would take a while to turn things around and on the evidence of the Penrith game it will indeed.

But back at Jensen Park and against Fairfield the team has the perfect opportunity to get things back on

track again.

A number of players in the Bankstown camp appear to be out of favour at the moment and someone had to go to make way for de Los Santos of course.

Ralph Bove and Glenn Moore missed the Penrith game, first choice keeper Brad Swancott was rested and Todd McManus was also absent after staying on the bench the previous week at Bonnyrigg. In addition neither Colin Luff nor Norman Tome seem to be sure of a spot either at this stage.

A draw will help neither team in the long run and who dares wins.



Bonnyrigg White Eagles vs Penrith Panthers



Saturday 18th January, 2003 — 7.00pm
SERBIAN CENTRE, BONNYRIGG

Seventh against Eighth looks an interesting match up, both sides desperate for three points to make inroads on the final five.

New striker Aaron Burgess has made quite an impression on the Bonnyrigg forward line and in partnership with the lively Kindness Agwu and Joe Bruni, there should be plenty of goalmouth action.

At the other end of the park the signing of former Berries defender Mark D'Alessandro has plugged a gap created by the recently departed Bobby Dragas and Freddy Umlil in the White Eagles back four.

Penrith picked up a handy win

over the struggling Bankstown last week and look to be getting back to their hard running best.

Striker Osvaldo El Ali is in doubt after sustaining a rib injury while youngster Michael McCrory could be partnered by Danny Hinton in a two pronged forward setup if Rod Hutchinson fails to recover from a knock he received against Bankstown.

Penrith livewires Daniel McCann and Jason Sciberras, had great games against the Lions and seem to be forming quite strong combination for the Panthers. How Bonnyrigg chose to deal with the two trump players

may determine how many goals the visiting team will posted.

Both coaches will be very much aware of the other fixtures over the weekend and know that a win here will allow their team to head to the turnaround point in a favourable position for the run-up to final series. A loss could mean the difference between finishing mid-table or ending up in relegation zone.

Having lost just one of their past four, they won't be any commodity, though their poor record of three losses in three attempts at The Serbian Centre is sure to test them.

CENTRAL COAST



Central Coast Coasties vs St George Saints



Saturday 18th January, 2003 — 7.00pm
PLUIM PARK, LISAROW

The Coasties had led the Premier League for most of the season until Apia's higher scoring win at Blacktown left the Leichhardt-based side above them on goal difference.

Then the two joint leaders met at Lambert Park and much was at stake.

Bragging rights apart Coasties knew that playing on the tight confines of the Marion Street pitch would test their versatility and youthful endeavour and so it proved.

St George on the other hand have always been an in and out side and the Saints will know that this trip north will be a waste of time for them

unless they knuckle down and put in their best effort.

Their home game against Blacktown City was always going to represent a tall order coming off a defeat by A.P.I.A. as the Demons were. The Saints gave it their best shot but could only manage to hold the Demons to two goals and zero for.

St George was unable to deal with a roused Blacktown at St George Stadium and it was no real surprise to see the Demons prevail after their loss the previous week at home to A.P.I.A.

The Coasties do have Peter

Preston and Marc Falzon back on duty and they both look ready to cause some problems for St George.

A big crowd should again be on hand despite the setback of losing heavily at A.P.I.A. and with many difficult games coming up soon it is a must win game for the home side and one patrons will get behind them in at Pluim Park.

With the Coasties back to home territory they should be able to maintain their unbeaten record at Pluim Park and as old song goes, they will send the Saints marching home without any points.



Blacktown City Demons vs Parramatta Eagles



Saturday 18th January, 2003 — 7.00pm
GABBIE STADIUM, BLACKTOWN

The Demons have had some tough games already this term and their last home game, which they dominated at various stages, proved to be another disappointment for supporters.

They now face a Parramatta side that has got into its stride rather late, despite a bright start at Jensen Park in its opening round win against Bankstown City Lions.

With wins at home recently and a good record on their travels apart from an aberration at Fairfield The Eagles should not fear the Demons, but may well play cautiously all the same. In recent times Blacktown has

tended to have the wood on Parramatta and with a pretty big need for maximum points they are likely to go for the win here too.

Blacktown disposed of St George clinically last Sunday and will want to do the same here too. That appears far less likely now that Parramatta has struck a very consistent patch of form and looks close to its best yet again.

The Demons need to pick up the pieces after their shock 3-1 loss at home to the leaders A.P.I.A. who at one stage looked outplayed.

The form since has made that game look more reasonable for the

Demons to lose.

Parramatta will look to Nathan Rivera and Adam Anderson almost certainly to spearhead their assault and this pair should cause some problems for the Blacktown defence.

With other striking options open, coach John Calleja will be patient and see if he can bring a shock element in late in the game, perhaps, to settle a game that may well still be in the balance at that stage.

In a replay of last season grand final expect to see many fireworks as the old saying goes hell hath no fury like a Demon scorned. Blacktown to win.



Rockdale City Suns vs



A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers

Saturday 18th January, 2003 — 7.00pm
JOHN CREHAN PARK, CRINGILA

This looks to be a real cracker and pits the undefeated league leaders against the highflying Suns who haven't lost a game since round two.

If there were any question marks over the ability of veteran striker Spase Najdoski at Premier League level, they have been blown away in a matter of weeks, as he enjoys a real purple patch in form.

His combination with the highly charged midfielder Denis Alilovic is worth the price of admission alone and how coach Les De Celis marks these two could well decide the out-

come of the contest.

For Leichhardt they will be boosted by the return of Damon Langan from suspension, and should have Jon Paul Boutros and Tony Tesoro back to strengthen their defence. Why a defence that has only conceded six goals in seven games (with three of those goals occurring in the opening round against the Fairfield Bulls) needs to be strengthened, Les only knows. But what is known is that Andrew Clark has finally found his niche at central back.

Midfielder Jeremy Brown is 50/50 for a start but should find his

way onto the bench after Sam Larocca had a solid match in his customary right midfield position.

With star striker Zlatko Arambasic finally gelling with partner Steve Karavatikis following last weeks hat-trick against the Coasties, it should be another exciting goalfest.

In their four previous meetings at the Suns home ground, A.P.I.A. have won just one of three but given their recent form and character, this little black duck is tipping the league leaders to hold the influential Spase and maintain top position on the competition ladder.



Canterbury-Marrickville Olympic vs Belconnen Blue Devils



Saturday 18th January, 2003 — 7.00pm
HENSON PARK, MARRICKVILLE

Those pundits predicting a fall for the Berries had better think twice, with the Greg Woodhouse coached side sitting comfortably in third position and ready to launch an assault on second.

With three wins from four starts, they are emerging as genuine candidates for the title, with a combination of a solid defence and some very speedy strikers.

With Tom Maric making his first start against the Bulls last weekend, their back three is comparable with the best around while Leigh Gunn and Archie Kotsopoulos are buzzing

and providing plenty of sting up front. Midfielder Con Paradis and George Nohra are expected to press for a start this week after missing last week with injury.

It was also heartening for the Berries to see Andy Amegashie bounce back from being disciplined the previous week for turning up to game late by responding with a goal and a solid performance. A lesser player would have spat the dummy and started to ring other clubs for transfer but not Andy.

The Blue Devils did everything but beat the Suns last weekend, racing to a three goal lead but failing to

take all three points.

It was a disappointing draw given the circumstances, with the performance of veteran Marko Perinovic worth a special mention for his three goals inside 21 minutes.

After struggling with just a bare squad of eleven fit players for last weeks match, coach Lino Fiorese has his work cut out to name a final fourteen ahead of such an important fixture.

On their previous two visits to Henson Park they have come away with the points both times, prompting the question, can they make it three from three?



SOCCER NSW



1ST ANNUAL UNDER 17 SYDNEY TOURNAMENT 11-19 JANUARY 2003

By Ray Sandell & Adam Mark

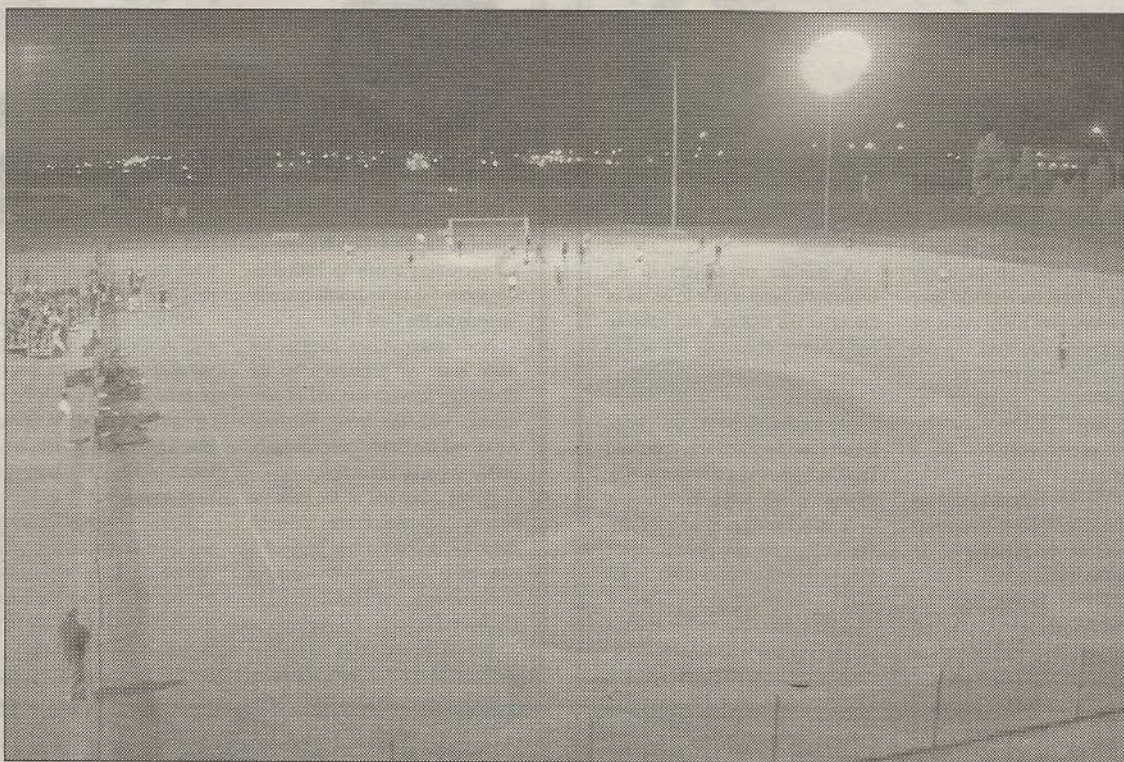
The possible future generation of Socceroos and National League players are on show at the magnificent Valentine Sports Park, at Glenwood in the Western Suburbs of Sydney, this week.

The inaugural Sydney Tournament for Under 17 teams, the brainchild of Soccer NSW's Special Projects Manager, John Hedison, commenced last Saturday with eight NSW teams taking part. The event will be held annually and already many teams from Oceania and other States have indicated that they will be competing in 2004.

A large crowd of proud parents, families and club officials was in attendance when Soccer NSW President Mr. Tom Doumanis officially opened the tournament on Saturday evening. Accompanied by Vice President Mr Jim Forrest, he thanked the teams for entering the competition at reasonably short notice, and indicated that the Sydney Tournament would be one of a number of similar tournaments that Soccer NSW would be organising over the next two or three years.

The National Under 15 and 16 boys Championships and Under 14 boys Friendly Games have been part of the Valentine Park calendar for a number of years and this year they are adding the Girls National Championships and a Girls Friendly games to the programme, which indicates that the newly formed Soccer NSW is already well on the way to providing well organised, serious competition for the Nation's young soccer players.

The Sydney Tournament is running from



A flood lit Valentine Sports Park hosts the first Annual Sydney Tournament.

Saturday 11th January to Saturday 18th with rest days on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

All matches are played in the evening to avoid the midday heat, and two groups, each of four teams, will compete for the Sydney Cup and Plate which will enable all teams to play five matches.

Saturday's matches saw some very entertaining and competitive football with the first game between NSW Institute of Sport and St George producing nine goals.

St George scored a shock early goal but the Institute team soon showed their muscle and at half time were leading four goals to one with Daniel Miller scoring two goals. Not to be outdone, St George made a great comeback in the second half but the score ended up 6-3 in favour of the NSW Institute of Sport team.

In the second early game Bonnyrigg White Eagles and Parramatta City played out a very tight affair with Bonnyrigg winning one nil with a first half goal by Zoran

Susak.

The late matches also produced a large number of goals with Hajduk Wanderers defeating Nepean four goals to one with an impressive Elsid Barkhousir netting a double for Hajduk whilst on pitch two Westfield Sports High and the only country team, Macleay Valley Rangers, fought out a very competitive two all draw, indicating that country football is also producing players of a high standard.

Day Two saw St George face a lively

Hajduk Wanderers outfit in the first of the group A fixtures. In a tight and flowing game that saw many opportunities for both sides, St George ran out one-nil victors courtesy of a Joseph Savor goal.

Hajduk were unlucky not to equalise late in the game, but for the heroics of Oliver Lovell in the St George goal. The other Group A fixture saw the NSW Institute of Sport flex their muscles again with an emphatic 6-0 victory over Nepean Association with goals to Wade Oostendorp (11m), Chris Nunes (62m), Daniel Miller (20m/28m), Ben Vidaic (69m) and Brendan Maroney (78m).

Group B had the Macleay Valley Rangers up against Bonnyrigg White Eagles in the first game. Two goals by the Rangers Nick Lambert in the 7th and 9th minutes put the White Eagles under pressure early.

The scoreline didn't change by the half-time break, but soon after Ben Andrews scored Macleay's third on the 48 minute mark and the match was put beyond doubt ten minutes later when William Eakin scored the North Coast team's fourth.

To Bonnyrigg's credit, they continued to battle and were rewarded for their efforts with a consolation goal in the 58th minute to Zoran Susak who netted his second goal of the tournament. In the other Group B match, Westfield Sports High defeated Parramatta City 4-1 in a fine display of fast paced football.

It appears that the recent unification of NSW Soccer Federation and NSW Amateur Soccer Federation and the formation of Soccer NSW has already proved its worth and indications are that soccer in NSW is at last headed in the right direction.

MATCH DAY 1

Saturday 11th January

NSW INSTITUTE OF SPORT	6	ST GEORGE	3
PARRAMATTA CITY	0	BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES	1
NEPEAN	1	HAJDUK WANDERERS	4
WESTFIELD SPORTS HIGH	2	MACLEAY VALLEY RANGERS	2

MATCH DAY 2

Sunday 12th January

MACLEAY VALLEY RANGERS	4	BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES	1
ST GEORGE	0	HAJDUK WANDERERS	1
NSW INSTITUTE OF SPORT	6	NEPEAN	0
WESTFIELD SPORTS HIGH	4	PARRAMATTA CITY	1



An enthusiastic crowd watching NSWIS playing Nepean on Day 2 of Sydney Tournament.

TABLES

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
NSW INSTITUTE OF SPORT	2	2	0	0	12	3	6
HAJDUK WANDERERS	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
ST GEORGE	2	0	0	2	3	7	0
NEPEAN	2	0	0	1	1	0	0

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MACLEAY VALLEY RANGERS	2	1	1	0	6	3	4
WESTFIELD SPORTS HIGH	2	1	1	0	6	3	4
BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
PARRAMATTA CITY	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

REMAINING FIXTURES

MATCH DAY 3

Tuesday 14th January

St George	vs	Nepean	6.00 pm
NSW Institute of Sport	vs	Hajduk Wanderers	6.00 pm
Macleay Valley Rangers	vs	Parramatta City	7.45 pm
Westfield Sports High	vs	Bonnyrigg White Eagles	7.45 pm

PLATE SEMI-FINALS

Thursday 16th January

3rd/A	4th/B	5.30 pm
3rd/B	4th/A	7.30 pm

CUP SEMI-FINALS

Thursday 16th January

15. 1st/B	2nd/A	5.30 pm
16. 1st/A	2nd/B	7.30 pm

FINALS DAY

Saturday 18th January

PLATE 3rd/4th PLAY-OFF
17. LOSER 13 LOSER 14 3.00 pm

PLATE FINAL

18. WINNER 13 WINNER 14 5.00 pm

CUP 3rd/4th PLAY-OFF

19. LOSER 15 LOSER 16 5.00 pm

CUP FINAL

20. WINNER 15 WINNER 16 7.00 pm

PRESENTATION CEREMONY

After Cup Final



SOCCER NSW



COERVER COACHING IN NZ

COERVER Coaching Oceania is proud to announce the successful launch of the COERVER program in New Zealand.

International Director Alfred Galustian and Oceania Director Paul Bentvelzen toured New Zealand to conduct the first COERVER instructor's course under the management of soccer NZ the governing body for soccer in New Zealand.

35 specially selected coaches throughout New Zealand including the current national team coach Mick Waitt and his staff as well as New Zealand director of football, Paul Smalley attended the course.

"The COERVER course impressed me greatly as well as all the participants, which highlighted the value of COERVER can be to both players and coaches in New Zealand" stated national team coach Mick Waitt on the success for the course.

"We (Soccer NZ) are extremely excited about the launch of COERVER Coaching here in New Zealand.

The COERVER method will excite and motivate players and coaches involved in the program. The Introductory coaches course has stimulated great interest in the COERVER method" was the comment by Paul Smalley, Director of Football, Soccer NZ.

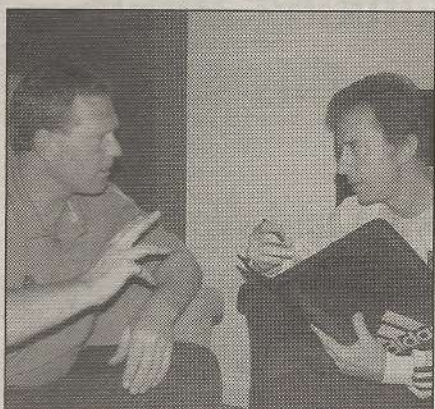
"With over 100,000 registered players within New Zealand, the COERVER program would enhance the foundation for their future success of many soccer players here in New Zealand," said Ricki Herbert, former New Zealand world cup star with over 84 international caps who will head up the program as technical director COERVER coaching New Zealand.

Oceania Director Paul Bentvelzen concluded by saying that "it has been an extremely successful year for COERVER Oceania with the introduction of the program into all states and regions in Australia as well as now here in New Zealand, it is the biggest soccer education program in Oceania, a goal which we set some 8 years ago of which we are now proud is a reality."



Paul Bentvelzen (left) Ricki Herbert (second left), and Mick Waitt (third left) look on as Coerver International Director, Alfred Galustian demonstrates.

Ricki Herbert Interview



Whilst in New Zealand, Alfred Galustian (right) caught up with former New Zealand international, Ricki Herbert (left) and talked about the Coerver Coaching Program.

AG: Ricki you played against Zico, who is now current Head Coach of Japan, in the 1982 World Cup Finals...what was that like?

RH: Playing against Brazil in a World Cup was a dream of mine...when we played Brazil they had a wonderful side, Zico, Socrates, Junior, Falcao. Zico was outstanding that day...He scored twice against us.

AG: When you were a young player what did you have to work on most?

RH: In New Zealand, we have good athletes, so our physical aspects are pretty good, so like most of my friends I had to work on my skills...my father was a great help and we often used to practice together...I also used to watch the English League Games each week on TV...That also helped me learn the game.

AG: You are now Technical Development Director of the New Zealand Soccer Federation... what are your main Goals?

RH: There are three main areas of focus. One...Player Development...since we do not have a professional league (We have a Team in the Australian Pro League)...We need to produce young players that can attract European Leagues...For a strong National Team, our players need to play in Top Compete ion regularly. The European Leagues are the strongest in the World, so our aim is get more of our players into them.

Two...As Technical Development Director I would

also like to improve our Coaches Education Programs. Especially to develop more Youth Coaches.

Three...Soccer is the largest youth participation sport in New Zealand; and each year more players come into the Sport...currently we have over 100,000 young players and one of our aims is to continue to popularize the game.

AG: Why did you want to bring the Coerver Coaching Program to New Zealand?

RH: I had heard about the Coerver Program and knew it had a very good reputation around the World...I also knew that In Australia the Program had grown...When I came to your Course last year in December, it convinced me that this Program could help to improve Soccer In New Zealand.

AG: What do you like about the Coerver program?

RH: Well, its focus on individual skill development in the young formative years is in my opinion correct...and your Program offers the content not only to improve our young players but also to contributor to our National Coaches Education Programs.

I also think it's a program that provides appeal for players, parents and coaches, whatever their abilities

and experience may be.

AG: Thanks Ricki, I look forward to visiting you and your fellow coaches in New Zealand regularly?

RH: That's great...we look forward to a close relationship between New Zealand Soccer and Coerver Coaching.

Ricki Herbert Profile

Player Career

International:
New Zealand 84 Appearances
World Cups 1982 and 1986 (Captain)

Clubs

Wolves (English Division 1)
Sydney Olympic (Australia)
Wellington (New Zealand)

Coaching Career

New Zealand Olympic Team
Assistant National Team
Under 17 Head Coaches
NZ Technical Director

POSITION VACANT



STATE COACHING POSITIONS

Soccer NSW is seeking expressions of interest for the following NSW State Team Coaching positions within the Elite Development Program.

- Under 14 Boys
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- Under 16 Girls
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- Sound knowledge of Soccer NSW Youth League structure and competition
- Experience planning and implementing coaching programs at an elite level
- Good communication and management skills
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Linda Christie
Human Resources Manager
Soccer NSW

Post - PO Box 6146, Baulkham Hills BC NSW 2153

Fax - 02 9629 3770

Email - linda@soccernsw.com.au

For more information phone 02 9629 1800 or email info@soccernsw.com.au

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Where: Valentine Sports park, Glenwood, NSW

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For more information or an application form, contact Tricia at Soccer NSW by email (tricia@soccernsw.com.au) or phone (02) 9629 1800

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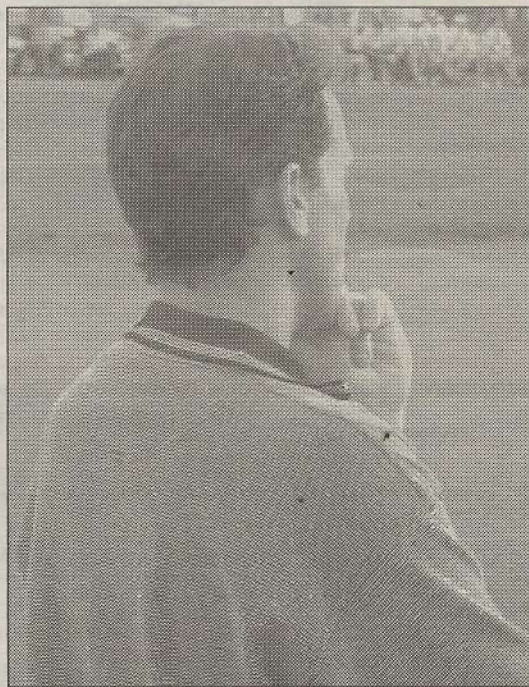
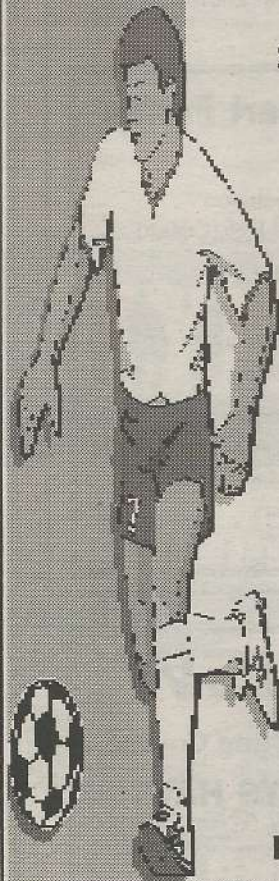
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Get involved in Soccer - The World Game.

ITALIAN SERIE A

ITALIAN AFFAIR

By Joe Russo

Following up on a segment on television recently where they nominated the best World Cup side in the television era, here are some reasons I would give for nominating Italy's 1982 side.

It may seem an odd choice to many but they were a real team. The Brazilian side in the same World Cup was made up of individual stars: Zico, Socrates, Falcao, Cerezo, Junior etc.

It is an old adage that 'a star team will always beat a team of stars' and that is exactly what happened. Italy needed to beat Brazil and they did three-two.

In those days the World Cup only had a knockout phase in the semi-finals. After the early group stage there was a second group stage. This second stage comprised of four groups of three teams each.

The winner of each of these four groups then advanced to the semi-finals. Italy, Brazil and Argentina were cruelly drawn in the same group.

Italy beat Argentina two-one and Brazil had beaten them three-one and therefore a draw would have been enough (on goal difference) for Brazil to advance.

However, it wasn't just the Brazil game that impressed. Italy, notoriously, had gotten off to a slow start in the group phase.

After three early draws against Poland, Peru and Cameroon, they scraped into the second group phase. They were unimpressive - a conservative team that appeared scared to lose rather than going for a win.

Enzo Bearzot, now in charge in his second World Cup, was coach and much to everyone's surprise they then beat the defending champions Argentina who had, amongst others, Diego Maradona. Legendary midfielder Marco Tardelli and reliable defender Antonio Cabrini scored for Italy that day.

Unfortunately for us living in Italy at the time RAI, the Italian television rights holder, was on strike that day and a radio call of the game was the next best thing. Paolo Rossi was a shock inclusion in Bearzot's squad prior to the World Cup because he had only played three Serie A games for Juventus prior to the World Cup. He was coming off a two-year ban after some match fixing allegations in 1980.

Rossi's greatest moment was the hat-trick he scored against Brazil and he instantly became a national hero. Bearzot's selection of him as a striker had been vindicated. Dino Zoff, the 40 year old goalkeeper and captain, who was criticised after the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, also became a national hero. He displayed the form of a person much younger and pulled off some impeccable saves.

Italy beat Poland, then a strong European team that had the likes of Zibby Boniek, two-nil in the semi-finals thanks to another two goals by Rossi.

In the final at the Bernabeu in Madrid they beat West Germany, captained by the great Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, three-one. Rossi, Tardelli and Sandro Altobelli were Italy's scorers.

The best three teams in the world those days were Brazil, Argentina and West Germany and Italy had beaten all three to claim the title.

Unlike Brazil in 2002, who didn't face any of the pre-tournament favourite teams to win the World Cup because they were all eliminated in the early rounds, Italy faced the best and won.

Having selected Italy of 1982 as the best World Cup side in the television era, one must concede that it is a biased look at a team that brought so much joy to the nation at that time. For us impressionable kids on our summer break after finishing primary school, it gave us a team to talk about well into our high school days.



Italian television, which is generally of a low standard anyway, reached a new low on Thursday last week because former Ecuadorian referee, Byron Moreno, appeared on some trashy show.

Moreno is the man that handled the South Korea v Italy game which saw Italy knocked out of the World Cup in controversial circumstances. After the match Moreno became arguably the most hated person in Italy. Fans will recall the Francesco Totti send off for diving and the disallowed Damiano Tommasi goal.

Moreno was later suspended by the Ecuadorian FA and removed from FIFA's lists after he allowed too much extra time in a local Ecuadorian club game. It was deemed to be a clear case of cheating.

It is amazing therefore that Moreno would be asked to appear on television and, worse still, that the producer of the show actually went to Quito in Ecuador to track him down.



Action between Brescia and Lazio in a dour game that ended all square.

EMPOLI 1 TORINO 1

Torino secured their second away draw of the season at Empoli, but they were left to rue the loss of maximum points after a dramatic finish.

An own-goal from Empoli's Sanchez Emilson Cribari a minute into injury-time at the end of the match put Torino into the lead.

But Tommaso Rocchi responded two minutes later, with time almost up, to restore parity and ensure honours were shared.

Torino remain second-bottom in the 18-team Serie A, with Empoli static in 10th place.

BRESCIA 0 LAZIO 0

Lazio produced one of their most disappointing performances of the season in a 0-0 draw at Brescia.

The point moved Roberto Mancini's side temporarily into second place.

Against Brescia, deprived of the injured Roberto Baggio, Lazio found the going tough and were matched chance for chance.

Lazio had their moments, and a Massimo Oddo cross was well met by Bernardo Corradi who sent his header too straight at goal and Sereni was able to tip the ball over his bar.



AC Milan's Andriy Shevchenko celebrates his goal against Bologna.

ROMA 0 CHIEVO 1

Olivier Dacourt's Roma debut was ruined when Chievo striker Federico Cossato struck with just a minute left on the clock to give his side all three points after a 1-0 win.

The game appeared to be heading for a goalless draw until Cossato's late winner for the Veronese side who nevertheless slip one place to fifth after Juventus' high-scoring victory.

Although influential Francesco Totti returned to Roma's first-team after injury, he could not inspire them to take all three points.

INTER 2 MODENA 0

Inter Milan maintained their challenge for the Serie A title with a comfortable 2-0 win against Modena.

The home side moved level with their city rivals on 36 points and are only second on goal difference.

Alvaro Recoba gave Hector Cuper's men a sixth-minute advantage and the prolific Hernan Crespo added a second 16 minutes later.

The win did have its downside though as Crespo was carried off on a stretcher shortly after the half-hour mark with what later revealed to be a groin injury.

COMO 1 ATALANTA 1

Como ended their run of three straight defeats with a 1-1 'home' draw with fellow strugglers Atalanta.

Eugenio Fascetti's side were playing their first game at Reggiana's Giglio Stadium after receiving a four-match ban from their own ground following crowd trouble in last month's game against Udinese.

Sasa Bjelanovic put Como into the lead just before half-time, but Paolo Foglio levelled matters 10 minutes after the restart before the visitors saw Luciano Zauri dismissed for his second bookable offence with 10 minutes remaining.

JUVENTUS 5 REGGINA 0

Juventus moved up to fourth in the table on goal difference after crushing struggling Reggina 5-0 at the Stadio delle Alpi.

Midfielder Antonio Conte started the rout midway through the first half and French striker David Trezeguet grabbed the second goals in the 35th minute.

Francesco Cozza put into his own net to add to Reggina's misery in the second half before an Alessandro del Piero penalty and a late Marco Di Vaio effort completed the emphatic win.

PIACENZA 1 PARMA 1

Vittorio Tosto's 46th-minute equaliser against Parma gave Piacenza a 1-1 draw and a crucial point in their bid to avoid relegation.

Romanian international Adrian Mutu fired the visitors ahead in the 29th minute, but Tosto sent the home fans wild with a well-taken leveller.

The point lifts Parma up to eighth, while Piacenza remain in 14th place.

UDINESE 0 PERUGIA 0

Udinese survived their current injury crisis almost intact with a scoreless draw at home against Perugia.

The home side maintained their seventh position despite going into the game without injured pair Andrea Sottil and Carsten Jancker or the suspended Jorge Caballero.

Despite the scoreline, the match was not bereft of chances as both sides created opportunities to score but failed to make the most of them.

AC MILAN 2 BOLOGNA 0

Serie A leaders AC Milan moved clear at the top of the table again with a fine 2-0 away win against Bologna on Sunday.

Ukrainian hotshot Andrei Shevchenko put Carlo Ancelotti's men ahead in the 53rd minute before Sergio Serginho wrapped up the points after 77 minutes.

FIXTURES

Saturday 19 January 2003

Atalanta v Roma
Chievo v Juventus
Lazio v Udinese
Milan v Piacenza
Modena v Brescia
Parma v Empoli
Perugia v Inter
Reggina v Bologna
Torino v Como

Empoli 1 - 1 Torino, Brescia 0 - 0 Lazio, AS Roma 0 - 1 Chievo, Bologna 0 - 2 AC Milan, Como 1 - 1 Atalanta, Juventus 5 - 0 Reggina, Piacenza 1 - 1 Parma, Udinese 0 - 0 Perugia, Inter Milan 2 - 0 Modena.

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AC Milan	16	11	3	2	32	10	36
Inter Milan	16	11	3	2	33	16	36
Lazio	16	9	6	1	31	15	33
Juventus	16	9	5	2	28	12	32
Chievo	16	10	2	4	27	13	32
Bologna	16	7	6	3	19	13	27
Udinese	16	7	5	4	15	14	26
Parma	16	6	5	5	27	19	23
Roma	16	6	5	5	27	23	23
Empoli	16	6	4	6	24	22	22
Perugia	16	5	4	7	18	23	19
Modena	16	6	1	9	12	24	19
Brescia	16	4	5	7	19	26	17
Piacenza	16	3	4	9	13	24	13
Atalanta	16	2	5	9	15	28	11
Reggina	16	2	4	10	13	32	10
Torino	16	2	3	11	9	30	9
Como	16	0	6	10	9	27	6



ENGLISH



An English Odyssey

By Stuart Jones

Welcome to another week of the bad, worse, and ugly (unless you are a fan of lower league teams) in English football. The news from Valley Parade Bradford continues to be bad in terms of their financial plight although this week saw a spark of light. Chairman Gordon Gibb was able to reorganise the club's debt with Lomard lenders. It means they have more time to pay off the instalment that was due next week however there is still no security for the club yet in terms of financial survival.

Meanwhile Barnsley's saviour Peter Doyle is considering selling the club to the CEO of the Tyke's main sponsor. Doyle has been criticised in some quarters since taking over and maybe looking to get out of the pressure cooker.

Olivier Dacourt has finally secured a move away from Elland Road with a loan deal seeing him off to Roma. Dacourt has been in dispute with Terry Venables and his move will certainly also lighten the wage bill.

Poor old Tottenham can't seem to take a trick. This week Bolton rejected a player swap deal which would have seen Michael Ricketts, who is unsettled at Reebok Stadium, move to White Hart Lane. It was the second time Glenn Hoddle has moved for the striker. This came on top of agent Eric Hall claiming Tim Sherwood was being excluded from first team football on the basis of personal dislike rather than playing ability.

He claimed it was clear from recent meetings that Glenn Hoddle's cold shoulder of Sherwood was more for personal reasons than playing ones. Fulham are rumoured to be interested in gaining the services of Sherwood.

Of course this is on top of Teddy Sheringham finally admitting what many of us know - Spurs are embarrassed. He was talking in terms of their 4-0 defeat at the hands of Southampton in the FA Cup. However there are many other things they could be embarrassed about over a number of years (eg trying to emulate Arsenal has certainly failed over time).

After the move for Robbie Fowler fell through Manchester City look to be after South African Benni McCarthy. However Celta Vigo have stated unless there is a permanent move for the player at season's end then there is no deal.

The big transfer news this week was Lee Bowyer returning on loan to the club he supported as a boy. Despite playing his early football with Charlton Bowyer was a Hammers fan and seemed to be genuinely delighted at having joined the club as they fight against relegation. It came on the same day he was handed a six match ban by UEFA for stamping. The question is if he stays at West Ham (and this will only happen should they stay up) then when will he get to serve out that ban?

Southampton has signed Argentinian winger Federico Arias for an undisclosed fee. He is 23 and comes from Velez Sarsfield. The club are also hoping to buy Danny Higginbotham from Derby despite their initial offer being rejected.

Birmingham City's purchases have been revealed to have been paid for directly by the club owners. Both David Gold and David Sullivan put their money where their mouth is when signing four players in the transfer period. The latest to come on board are Ipswich's Jamie Clapham and Tottenham's Stephen Clemence.

Howard Wilkinson has welcomed Japanese World Cup star Kazuyuki Todi to the club as he starts a trial period of a fortnight. Wilkinson currently has 14 players out injured for Sunderland and with debts of around 25 million pounds there is little chance of further players coming in.

In lower league transfers Preston has spent 130,000 pounds on Celtic's Simon Lynch. He is joining Jonathon Gould at Deepdale after the Celtic keeper was signed up for one and a half years. Former Northern Spirit player Ben Burgess has been loaned to Oldham Athletic by Stockport County. Neil Emblen has gone to Walsall from Norwich, whilst Keiron Durkan has left Rochdale for Swansea on a free transfer. Drissa Diallo from Mechelen has joined Burnley.

Farnborough have switched their tie to Highbury. In The Sun this week Terry Westley was quoted as saying "If it is David verse Goliath why should we not play in the Coliseum?"

Unfortunately this switch has meant Sky TV will no longer cover the match which is a real shame but having been to Farnham's home ground I personally know too well that the ground is not up to hosting the League Champions. Matthew Upson was quoted as saying it did not matter either way but I wonder if he remembers a little team called Wrexham who finished 92nd in the league, in 1992, when Arsenal were champions, but went on to beat the Gunners in the FA Cup third round the next year.

Fantastic results in the League Cup - from the smaller team fans out there. Sheffield United defeated Liverpool 2-1 in Sheffield to pile more pressure on Gerard Houllier. Youngster Michael Tonge scored twice and is now the latest "boy wonder".

Man Utd drew 1-1 at Old Trafford in the other semi final against Blackburn, both goals coming in the space of three minutes. In both semi finals the favourites had taken the initial lead. However this is only half time and both Blackburn and the Blades should expect a hard second leg.

If you go undefeated through a season you would think it only reasonable you would be the best supported team in the league but not so for Preston in 1889.

They averaged 6280 fans a match whilst Everton averaged 7260. That first season Derby averaged the lowest crowds of just 3050. The following year Preston went up to 7650 but so too did Everton - reaching a figure of 10110. By the third season Preston had dropped to 7225 and Notts County, Burnley, Blackburn Rovers and Everton were all better supported.

Everton were the best supported team from season 1888/89 through until season 1898/99 when Aston Villa took the reigns (with 23045 - the first team to reach over 20000).

Newcastle took over the reigns in season 1904/05 but only held it for three seasons before Chelsea came top of the attendance table. It then swapped between Newcastle and Chelsea until 1922/23 except for 1915 when Manchester City came top in the crowd stakes.

Over the years Liverpool, Arsenal, Tottenham and Manchester United have also held several titles as having the best crowd average over a season. To have only eight teams hold this title after so many years of the championship is really quite amazing.

Keep enjoying your English football.

Thierry Henry joined Dennis Bergkamp as a member of Arsenal's top-up club as the reigning champions re-established a five-point lead at the top of the Premiership by sweeping Birmingham City aside at St. Andrews.

Bergkamp had reached the 100-goal mark in the FA Cup tie against Oxford United a week ago and Henry's two goals against the Blues enabled him to reach that milestone in his 181st appearance for the Gunners. It was a thoroughly convincing display by Arsene Wenger's side as they clinically disposed of the Premiership new boys to move clear again of second-placed Manchester United. A second-half hat-trick from Robbie Keane gave Spurs a dramatic 4-3 victory over Everton at White Hart Lane and lifted them to eighth in the Premiership.

On-loan Brian McBride had given Everton the lead just 10 minutes into his debut but the American striker's joy was short-lived as Gus Poyet headed an equaliser four minutes later.

Everton looked the more likely winners at the break but Keane emerged as the matchwinner after the interval with a superb treble.

He netted his first after rounding the goalkeeper in the 50th minute and added a second after 68 with a drilled shot into the corner.

But each time Everton found a response. Steve Watson pounced on a Steffen Iversen error to make it 2-2 and Tomasz Radzinski levelled again with a crisp left-foot strike 16 minutes from time.

But Keane's third and final goal was decisive. Picking up a bouncing ball, he turned inside Joseph Yobo and cleverly clipped the ball over the goalkeeper. The 4-3 win lifted Spurs up to eighth, tied on 35 points with Liverpool.

Manchester United and Chelsea both chalked up handsome victories on Saturday to keep the pressure on Barclaycard Premiership leaders Arsenal. United kept pace at the top of the table thanks to a 3-1 win at West Brom, while Chelsea, who won 4-1, proved too good for Charlton at Stamford Bridge.

United made a far from encouraging start when they went a goal down to the struggling Baggies via a long-range strike by Jason Koumas in the sixth minute at The Hawthorns.

But Ruud van Nistelrooy had the Red Devils level within two minutes, and then midfielder Paul Scholes made it 2-1 midway through the first half.

It was Ole Gunnar Solskjaer who stretched the winning margin with



Ruud van Nistelrooy of Manchester United is challenged by Russell Hoult of West Brom.

the third goal in the 55th minute.

Chelsea, meanwhile, made light of their muddy home patch, which has attracted plenty of criticism in recent weeks.

The Blues were the first team in the country to make their mark on the scoresheet when Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink put them one up inside three minutes, from the penalty spot after a foul by Chris Powell.

Frenchman William Gallas made it two eight minutes later, and it was 3-0 courtesy of Eidur Gudjohnsen just after the half-hour.

Chelsea leaked a goal from the penalty spot to Jason Euell just before half-time but re-established their three-goal cushion thanks to Graeme Le Saux nine minutes after the break.

There was also an eventful afternoon at Upton Park, where the controversial Lee Bowyer came within 10 minutes of marking his first game for West Ham following his cut-price move from Leeds by helping the Londoners off the bottom of the table. The Hammers went a goal down to Newcastle when striker Craig Bellamy celebrated his new four-year deal at St James' Park with a ninth-minute goal.

But the hosts were level five minutes later thanks to England midfielder Joe Cole - and then Jermain Defoe popped up with a second goal right on half-time. It was not quite enough, though - because Jermaine Jenas nicked a point for Newcastle in the 81st minute.

Bowyer's old club Leeds finished on the wrong end of their mid-table clash with Manchester City at Maine Road. Leeds went down 2-1, after City's Shaun Goater hit the target just before the half-hour mark and then a Niclas Jensen volley buried Terry Venables and Co in the 50th minute. Harry Kewell's late strike for the visitors was nothing more than scant consolation.

Michael Owen's first Premiership goal since November and his 15th of the season put Liverpool one up on Aston Villa at Anfield.

But the Reds' hopes of re-igniting their waning championship challenge foundered on an equaliser from the spot by veteran Dion Dublin four minutes into the second half. James Beattie went one better than Owen by notching his 15th and 16th goals of the campaign for Southampton, at Middlesbrough.

The England aspirant struck just before half-time and then a quarter-of-an-hour into the second.

But Gordon Strachan's Saints squandered their lead and left The Riverside with just one point, after Noel Whelan got one back in the 73rd minute and then Massimo Maccarone scored from the spot with eight minutes left.

There were no goals in the relegation battle between Bolton and Fulham at the Reebok Stadium, and it was a stalemate too for struggling Sunderland and Blackburn at the Stadium of Light.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Bolton W. 0 - 0 Fulham, Chelsea 4 - 1 Charlton Athletic, Liverpool 1 - 1 Aston Villa, Manchester C. 2 - 1 Leeds U., Middlesbrough 2 - 2 Southampton, Sunderland 0 - 0 Blackburn R., West Bromwich A. 1 - 3 Manchester U., West Ham U. 2 - 2 Newcastle U., Tottenham H. 4 - 3 Everton, Birmingham C. 0 - 4 Arsenal.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	23	15	4	4	49	24	49
Man Utd	23	13	5	5	38	23	44
Chelsea	23	11	8	4	40	21	41
Newcastle	22	12	3	7	37	31	39
Southampton	23	9	9	5	27	22	36
Everton	23	10	6	7	28	28	36
Liverpool	23	9	8	6	31	23	35
Tottenham	23	10	5	8	34	34	35
Man City	23	10	4	9	32	32	34
Blackburn	23	8	9	6	29	25	33
Middlesbrough	23	8	6	9	27	23	30
Leeds	23	9	3	11	31	29	30
Aston Villa	23	8	5	10	22	24	29
Charlton	22	8	5	9	25	29	29
Birmingham	23	6	7	10	19	31	25
Fulham	22	6	6	10	23	27	24
Bolton	22	4	8	10	23	37	20
Sunderland	23	4	7	12	15	32	19
West Ham	22	3	8	11	23	40	17
West Brom	22	4	4	14	17	35	16

FIRST DIVISION

Leicester C. 0 - 0 Stoke C., Postp. Bradford C. ? - ? Crystal Palace, Burnley 1 - 1 Ipswich T., Coventry C. 0 - 0 Brighton & Hove A., Derby County 1 - 1 Gillingham, Millwall 4 - 0 Watford, Norwich C. 1 - 1 Rotherham U., Postp. Preston North End ? - ? Nottingham F., Sheffield W. 3 - 2 Reading, Walsall 0 - 1 Wolverhampton W., Wimbledon 3 - 3 Grimsby T., Postp. Portsmouth ? - ? Sheffield U.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portsmouth	27	17	8	2	54	26	59
Leicester	27	16	7	4	41	24	55
Sheff Utd	25	13	7	5	37	24	46
Norwich	27	12	8	7	38	24	44
Nottm Forest	27	12	7	8	42	27	43
Coventry	28	11	9	8	35	31	42
Reading	26	13	3	10	28	24	42
Wolverhampton	27	11	8	8	44	29	41
Crystal Palace	27	10	11	6	41	29	41
Watford	28	11	6	11	33	44	39
Rotherham	28	10	8	10	45	37	38
Ipswich	27	10	8	9	41	34	38
Millwall	28	10	7	11	35	43	37
Burnley	27	10	7	10	40	49	37
Gillingham	26	9	9	8	33	34	36
Derby	28	10	5	13	32	38	35
Wimbledon	26	9	7	10	42	42	34
Preston	27	7	10	10	41	45	31
Walsall	28	8	5	15	40	46	29
Bradford	26	7	7	12	29	45	28
Grimsby	27	6	7	14	33	52	25
Stoke	28	5	9	14	31	49	24
Sheff Wed	28	5	8	15	26	45	23
Brighton	27	4	7	16	25	45	19

FA CUP ACTION

Bristol C. 0 - 1 Wigan Athletic, Postp. Northampton T. ? - ? Cardiff C., Postp. Cheltenham ? - ? Tranmere R., Colchester U. 1 - 2 Crewe Alexandra, Huddersfield T. 0 - 1 Peterborough U., Postp. Luton T. ? - ? Plymouth Argyle, Mansfield T. 0 - 0 Wycombe W., Postp. Notts County ? - ? Stockport County, Postp. Oldham Athletic ? - ? Brentford, Postp. Port Vale ? - ? Chesterfield, Queens Park R. 1 - 0 Barnsley, Postp. Swindon T. ? - ? Blackpool.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wigan	26	19	5	2	44	14	62
Crewe	26	15	5	6	44	21	50
Cardiff	25	15	5	5	42	21	50
Oldham	26	14	8	4	40	19	50
Bristol City	26	15	4	7	51	30	49
QPR	27	12	7	8	35	30	43
Tranmere	26	11	5	10	36	40	38
Luton	25	10	7	8	37	33	37
Chesterfield	26	11	4	11	23	30	37
Plymouth	25	9	9	7	34	31	36
Brentford	24	10	6	8	30	27	36
Blackpool	25	10	6	9	33	35	36
Wycombe	27	9	7	11	38	36	34
Swindon	26	8	7	11	32	38	31
Northampton	26	8	5	13	23	40	29
Stockport	26	8	4	14	34	41	28
Peterborough	27	6	9	12	28	36	27
Port Vale	25	7	6	12	29	39	27
Colchester	26	6	9	11	27	37	27
Barnsley	26	7	6	13	29	41	27
Notts County	25	5	11	9	36	39	26
Mansfield	26	7	4	15	41	58	25
Cheltenham	25	5	8	12	23	38	23
Huddersfield	26	5	7	14	19	34	22

FIXTURES

Saturday 21 December

Arsenal v Middlesbrough
Birmingham v Charlton
Chelsea v Aston Villa
Leeds v Southampton
Newcastle v Fulham
West Brom v Sunderland
West Ham v Bolton

Sunday 22 December

Blackburn v Man Utd
Liverpool v Everton
Monday 23 December
Man City v Tottenham

Spanish Primera Liga

Real Mallorca staged a late comeback to win 2-1 at Rayo Vallecano and remain firmly in the hunt for a European place next season on Sunday.

Dominguez Carlos scored the winner just six minutes from time after Walter Pandiani had equalised in the 71st minute, cancelling out Alvir Bobic's 56th-minute opener for Vallecano.

The home side nearly grabbed an equaliser two minutes from time but Mallorca keeper Leo Franco made a crucial save.

Real Betis are still searching for their first win since the winter break after allowing lowly CD Alaves to come back and earn a 2-2 draw.

Fernando put Betis ahead on the stroke of half-time, only for Magno Mocelin to level the scores just before the hour-mark.

But the drama unfolded in stoppage time when Spain winger Joaquin thought he had given Betis all three points, only for Jesus Turiel to earn Alaves a share of the spoils shortly after.



Valencia's John Carew (left) tussles with Real Sociedad's Bjorn Kvarme.

Two moments of magic from Fernando Torres earned Atletico Madrid a valuable 3-1 win over Deportivo.

First the young striker scored the goal that gave Atletico the lead again in the 77th minute, and then he set up Fernando Correa for the third just two minutes later.

Deportivo had drawn level in the fifth minute through Roy Makaay after Jose Mari had given Atletico a first minute lead. Villarreal surged up to 11th in the Primera Liga after a hard-fought win at Athletic Bilbao.

The visitors started the day two places above the relegation zone but their position looks much healthier thanks to a fine defensive display and Francisco Farinos's fourth-minute strike.

A bad-tempered clash boiled over towards the end with both sides being reduced to 10 men.

Villarreal's Antonio Guayre was sent off nine minutes from time and Ismael Urzaiz joined him in stoppage time - both players collecting two yellow cards.

Recreativo Huelva avoided defeat against Sevilla but that will not stop speculation over the future of Lucas Alcaraz. The coach survived a board meeting earlier this week to discuss his future but could find his name on the

agenda once more after a 0-0 draw.

Rooted to the Primera Liga basement after taking 10 points from 17 games, Alcaraz's side are now seven points adrift following next-worst Espanyol's 3-0 win over Racing Santander.

The hosts went ahead after eight minutes thanks to Antonio Soldevilla and the points were effectively sealed when Raul Tamudo doubled their advantage from the penalty spot midway through the second half.

Savo Milosevic added a third 13 minutes from the end. Jose Manuel Mateo's 58th-minute goal earned Osasuna a vital point in their 1-1 draw with Valladolid.

The visitors, who started the day two points above the relegation zone, took the lead after 38 minutes through David Aganzo.

But the hosts hit back 13 minutes after the break to claim a share of the spoils.

On Saturday, Valencia were gifted a goal by Real Sociedad but still could not beat the unlikely challengers to their Liga crown, as the league leaders fought back to draw 2-2 at the Mestalla.

Real defender Agustin Aranzabal scored a deeply embarrassing own goal on the hour mark to put the home side 2-0 up.

With his goalkeeper Sander Westerveld out of his goal and seemingly making himself available for a short back-pass, Aranzabal, in the left-back position, drilled the ball towards the goal where he thought the Dutch custodian would be stood.

But to his horror, there was no-one there and the ball rolled into an empty net.

However, this Real side have proved to be made of stern stuff and they battled back impressively with goals from Darko Kovacevic and Kahveci Nihat to maintain their unbeaten record after 17 rounds of matches.

John Carew had a goal ruled out for a foul on a Real defender, but the visitors deserved the point they left with.

The night's other match saw Ronaldo score the only goal of the game as Real Madrid notched up their sixth win in succession with

a narrow 1-0 victory over Celta Vigo at the Balaidos.

The Brazil star struck his seventh goal of the season after just six minutes to hand Vicente del Bosque's men three vital points in their quest to overtake Sociedad at the top of La Liga.

Barcelona coach Louis van Gaal's improvised defence continued to perform but that is unlikely to appease the Nou Camp faithful after a lacklustre performance against Malaga. The Catalans were deprived of Fernando Navarro, Philippe Christenval, Patrik Andersson and Frank de Boer through injury and suspension but managed a 0-0 draw against Malaga.

Celta de Vigo 0 - 1 Real Madrid, Valencia 2 - 2 Real Sociedad, Athletic Bilbao 0 - 1 Villarreal, Espanyol 3 - 0 Racing Santander, Osasuna 1 - 1 Valladolid, Rayo Vallecano 1 - 2 Mallorca, Real Betis 2 - 2 Deportivo Alaves, Recreativo Huelva 0 - 0 Sevilla, Atletico Madrid 3 - 1 Deportivo La Coruna, Malaga 0 - 0 Barcelona.

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Sociedad	17	10	7	0	33	20	37
Real Madrid	17	10	6	1	37	16	36
D Coruna	17	8	5	4	24	20	29
Valencia	17	8	5	4	27	14	29
Real Betis	17	7	6	4	28	21	27
Celta Vigo	17	8	3	6	20	17	27
Mallorca	17	8	2	7	23	30	26
Atletico Madrid	17	6	6	5	26	22	24
Barcelona	17	6	5	6	25	19	23
Sevilla	17	5	6	6	15	14	21
Valladolid	17	6	3	8	17	19	21
Villarreal	17	5	6	6	19	21	21
Athletic Bilbao	17	6	3	8	25	32	21
Racing Santander	17	6	2	9	20	23	20
Malaga	17	4	8	5	22	24	20
CD Alaves	17	5	5	7	21	28	20
Osasuna	17	5	4	8	18	23	19
Rayo Vallecano	17	5	3	9	18	25	18
Espanyol	17	5	1	11	19	28	16
Recreativo Huelva	17	2	4	11	13	34	10

SPANISH FIXTURES SATURDAY 19, JANUARY 2003

Barcelona v Valencia
Deportivo v Athletic
Mallorca v Rec de Huelva
R.Vallecano v Valladolid
R.Sociedad v Celta
Sevilla v Malaga
Villarreal v Espanyol
Racing v Betis
Alaves v Osasuna
R.Madrid v At.Madrid

Ethniki Katigoria

Panathinaikos beat bitter rivals Olympiakos 3-2 in a highly-charged encounter at the Apostolos Nikolaidis stadium.

The victory takes the hosts level on points with their opponents, and moved into top spot on goal difference.

Rene Henriksen headed Predrag Djordjevic's penetrating free-kick into his own net to give the visitors the lead in the ninth minute, but Emmanuel Olisadebe levelled the scores when he headed Giorgos Karagounis' cross home nine minutes later.

Olympiakos regained the lead through another own goal 10 minutes after half-time, this time Sotiris Kyriakos deflected Akis Antzas' cross past his own keeper before Angelos Bassinas pulled Panathinaikos level with a thunderous free-kick after 73 minutes.

However, four minutes later, Joonas Kolkka rolled the ball home to send the home fans into a frenzy and, although Olisadebe was red carded in the dying minutes, they held on to take the points.

Third-placed PAOK upped the pressure on the top

two by running out comfortable 4-0 winners against Aegaleo.

Giorgos Georgiadis got the ball rolling in the 66th minute and Dimitris Salpigdis doubled the lead three minutes later following a fine move.

Georgiadis grabbed his second from the penalty spot after 83 minutes, while Yiannakis Okkas found the net with a sweet lob in stoppage time.

AEK Athens stay in fourth place after crushing basement club Panachaiki Patras 6-0, with Vassilis Lakis claiming a hat-trick.

Demis Nikolaidis started the rout in the 21st minute with a fine strike and Lakis doubled the lead from Christos Maladenis' cross after 53 minutes.

Lakis grabbed his second when his shot deflected off a post and into the net four minutes later and he com-

pleted his treble in the 74th minute with a low header.

Dimitris Nalitzis' penalty and Vas Borbakis' free-kick wrapped up the emphatic win in the dying minutes.

OFI Crete surprised their hosts Xanthi by sealing a 4-1 win at the Xanthi stadium.

Spiros Vallas put the hosts ahead when he raced onto Ismaila Ba's rebounded penalty and slotted home in the 18th minute, but OFI new-boy Methodi Teyanov equalised with a 25-yard drive on the stroke of half-time.

Mauricio Solis did even better four minutes after the restart, finding the target from 35 yards out, while Roland Gomez made it 3-1 five minutes later. Kostas Kiassos grabbed his side's fourth with a rasping shot from the edge of the area.

Andreas Lagonikakis' 51st-minute header was enough to give Panionios all three points at Proodeftiki, while Aris ran out 1-0 winners at Ionikos thanks to Njugo Nyren Demba's low drive after 61 minutes.

Giannina earned three valuable points in their fight to move clear of relegation trouble thanks to a narrow 1-0 win at home to fellow strugglers Akrotiris.

With only one win from 13 matches before the match, Giannina desperately needed a good result against the visitors and they got it through striker Thomas Kyprisiss' solitary goal in the 38th minute.

Xenofon Gitis and Kyprisiss had earlier missed chances to put the hosts ahead inside the first 14 minutes, but the Zosimadon stadium faithful were able to breathe a sigh of relief when the latter opened the scoring.

It proved to be enough to seal the win for Giannina and Kyprisiss could even afford to miss a golden chance to make it

2-0 on the hour mark.

The win lifts Giannina to 13th in the 16-team Ethniki Katigoria, six points clear of bottom club Panahaiki, while Akrotiris are second from bottom.

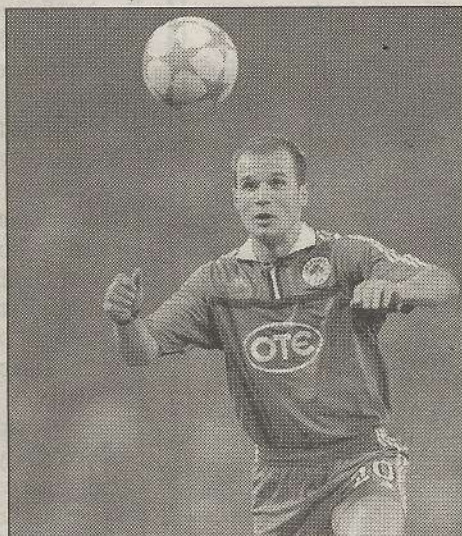
In the day's other match, Kallithea defeated Iraklis 1-0, handing the visitors' new boss Egen Gerard his first defeat.

Costas Tsalkis came off the bench to fire the only goal of the game two minutes from time, just two minutes after he came on for Radislav Dragisevic.

The result damages Iraklis' UEFA Cup hopes while Kallithea move up to 11th.

Giannina 1 - 0 Akrotiris, Kallithea 1 - 0 Iraklis Saloniki, AEK Athens 6 - 0 Panahaiki Patras, Proodeftiki 0 - 1 Panionios, PAOK Saloniki 4 - 0 Egaleo Athens, Xanthi Skoda 1 - 4 OFI Crete, Ionikos Nikea 0 - 1 Aris Saloniki, Panathinaikos 3 - 2 Olympiakos Piraeus.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	14	8	5	1	32	8	29
Panathinaikos	14	9	2	3	18	10	29
PAOK	14	8	3	3	34	18	27
AEK	14	7	4	3	26	13	25
Aris	14	7	4	3	17	13	25
Panionios	14	7	3	4	16	10	24
Xanthi	14	5	7	2	17	10	22
Iraklis	14	6	3	5	16	14	21
Proodeftiki	14	5	6	3	16	12	21
Egaleo	14	3	7	4	10	17	16
OFI	14	3	6	5	15	16	15
Kallithea	14	3	5	6	11	15	14
Giannina	14	2	5	7	12	18	11
Ionikos	14	2	4	8	8	24	10
Akrotiris	14	2	2	10	9	27	8
Panahaiki	14	1	2	11	5	37	5



Angelos Bassinas scored in PAO's victory over rivals Olympiakos.

FIXTURES

Saturday 19, January 2003

Iraklis v Panahaiki
Olympiakos v OFI
Panionios v Aris
Akrotiris v Kallithea
Egaleo v Ionikos
PAOK v Xanthi
Giannina v AEK
Proodeftiki v Panathinaikos



Scottish Premier League

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	24	20	3	1	68	18	63
Celtic	24	19	3	2	63	16	60
Hearts	24	10	7	7	40	41	37
Dunfermline	23	11	3	9	39	41	36
Hibernian	24	10	4	10	36	36	34
Kilmarnock	24	9	6	9	26	36	33
Dundee	24	6	7	11	28	39	25
Partick	24	5	9	10	25	37	24
Aberdeen	24	5	9	10	21	38	24
Livingston	24	6	5	13	31	36	23
Motherwell	23	4	6	13	28	41	18
Dundee Utd	24	3	8	13	20	46	17

Dutch Eredivisie

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	17	13	3	1	42	10	42
Ajax	17	12	4	1	44	18	40
Feyenoord	17	10	3	4	40	20	33
NAC	16	6	8	2	22	12	26
Roda JC	17	7	5	5	30	25	26
Willem II	17	7	4	6	26	23	25
RKC	17	7	4	6	18	23	25
FC Utrecht	17	6	6	5	23	21	24
NEC	17	6	5	6	22	26	23
FC Twente	17	5	7	5	21	24	22
Heerenveen	17	5	5	7	24	29	20
AZ	16	6	2	8	27	40	20
Excelsior	17	4	6	7	20	29	18
Vitesse	17	4	4	9	17	20	16
RBC	17	4	4	9	20	29	16
FC Groningen	17	3	4	10	16	28	13
FC Zwolle	17	3	4	10	16	30	13
De Graafschap	17	3	4	10	18	39	13

German Bundesliga

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	17	12	3	2	36	14	39
Borussia Dortmund	17	9	6	2	28	13	33
Werder Bremen	17	10	3	4	34	27	33
Schalke	17	7	7	3	21	14	28
VfB Stuttgart	17	7	6	4	27	22	27
1860 Munich	17	7	4	6	25	24	25
Hamburg	17	7	4	6	21	23	25
VfL Bochum	17	6	5	6	31	28	23
Hertha Berlin	17	6	5	6	19	19	23
Wolfsburg	17	7	2	8	20	22	23
Arminia Bielefeld	17	6	4	7	21	24	22
Nurnberg	17	6	3	8	23	27	21
Hansa Rostock	17	5	5	7	20	20	20
Bayer Leverkusen	17	5	5	7	24	27	20
Borussia M'gladbach	17	5	4	8	20	19	19
Hannover 96	17	4	4	9	22	33	16
FC Kaiserslautern	17	3	4	10	17	28	13
Cottbus	17	2	4	11	13	38	10



Nice's Kaba Diawara (left) strides past Lille OSC's Eric Abidal.

French Ligue 1

Nice returned to the top of the Ligue 1 summit thanks to a 2-0 home win over Lille, while title pretenders Monaco were held to a disappointing goalless draw by Bastia.

Nice rediscovered their early-season form against a Lille team who were beaten by Fernando D'Amico's sending off as well as the home side's goals. Gernot Rohr's side had not scored in the last three matches before the winter break and they looked set to be frustrated again until Abdelmalek Cherrad put them ahead in the 57th minute. D'Amico walked just four minutes later after collecting his second yellow card.

And Kaba Diawara's successfully-converted penalty in the 80th minute ensured Nice earned the points which took them above Marseille and Lyon.

An irate Didier Deschamps was banished to the stands and Eric Cubilier was given his marching orders for a crude challenge as Monaco's bid to prove themselves as genuine title contenders suffered a setback.

They had to settle for a point against Bastia after Cubilier's dismissal left them with 10 men for all the second half.

Coach Deschamps had been hoping for his side to win and keep up the pressure on the likes of Lyon and Nice.

And although they battled on gamely with 10 men, creating a number of late chances, winning the match was beyond the principality outfit.

The dismissal of Deschamps, in the dying minutes of the match, came after he criticised referee Bruno Derrien and capped a disappointing night for the hosts. Rennes continued to turn their fortunes around with a 2-1 victory over Guingamp, who slipped from fourth to fifth as a result.

Both sides had a man red-carded when Olivier Echouafni for Rennes and Guingamp's Christophe Le Roux were sent off for fighting as the sparks flew in the closing minutes of the game.

In October the club looked doomed for relegation but the arrival of Vahid Halilhodzic sparked a revival which today saw them extend their winning run to five games.

They have already accounted for Lille, Strasbourg, Paris St Germain and Troyes and after being given a helping hand from Guingamp's Claude Michel, who found the back of his own net, and a goal from Dominique Arribage, Rennes ensured their visitors were added to the list.

Stephane Carnot's late goal was little more than a consolation for the Breton side. Ajaccio's problems near the foot of the table were not helped by a goalless draw against PSG as both sides finished with 10 men.

The hosts, third from bottom, were faced with trying to hang on for more than 20 minutes after they had Moroccan international Walid Regragui sent off for violent conduct in the 69th minute. However, Ajaccio's task was eased when, four minutes later, PSG's Nigerian forward Bartholomew Ogbeche was also dismissed for violent conduct.

Bordeaux gave their quest to gain a European place a boost with a 3-1 win at home to derby rivals and basement club Montpellier Bertrand Robert gave Elie Baup's side an early scare by giving the visitors the lead after 11 minutes at the Parc Lescure.

Montpellier, without a win away from home this season, were pegged back though by Bortolini Savio's goal 15 minutes later.

The home side went in front thanks to David Jemali's strike just after half-time and Portugal striker Pauleta added a third - his 11th of the season - to seal the points in the final minute.

Elsewhere, Amdy Faye increased the pressure on struggling Troyes by scoring the only goal of the game as Auxerre claimed a narrow win at the Abbe-Deschamps stadium.

The Senegal international, who played for his country at last year's World Cup in the Far East, struck in only the fifth minute against the side next-to-bottom in the table. His goal was enough to inflict Troyes' 11th defeat in 21 matches, while strengthening Auxerre's position in seventh just ahead of Paris Saint Germain. Two of the day's other matches, Lens v Sedan and Le Havre v Strasbourg, were postponed due to frozen pitches.

Lyon 1 - 0 Marseille, Rennes 2 - 1 Guingamp, Auxerre 1 - 0 Troyes, Bordeaux 3 - 1 Montpellier, Postp. Le Havre ? - ? Strasbourg, Postp. Lens ? - ? Sedan, Monaco 0 - 0 Bastia, Postp. Nantes ? - ? Sochaux, Nice 2 - 0 Lille, Ajaccio 0 - 0 Paris S.G.

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nice	21	10	7	4	26	14	37
Lyon	21	10	6	5	37	25	36
Marseille	21	10	5	6	21	20	35
Monaco	21	9	7	5	32	20	34
Guingamp	21	10	4	7	32	26	34
Sochaux	20	9	6	5	23	14	33
Auxerre	19	9	5	5	20	17	32
Bordeaux	21	8	6	7	26	20	30
PSG	21	7	8	6	29	21	29
Nantes	20	8	4	8	23	24	28
Lens	20	7	7	6	18	19	28
Lille	21	7	7	7	20	26	28
Strasbourg	20	7	6	7	23	30	27
Rennes	21	7	5	9	21	23	26
Bastia	21	7	4	10	21	28	25
Sedan	19	6	5	8	22	25	23
Le Havre	20	4	7	9	14	24	19
AC Ajaccio	21	4	7	10	16	27	19
Troyes	21	3	7	11	14	23	16
Montpellier	20	3	7	10	17	29	16

Alain's Corner

Ronaldo
on top
of the
World!

After three difficult years, six coaches and a lot of disillusionment Olympique Marseille have finally found the right formula. With a top coach, Alain Perrin, who has taken control of Marseille he has built a good team usually difficult to play and without a lot of star players only captain, Franck Leboeuf. The rest of the team was made up of some very good players who lost a lot of confidence in the last two years.

Now with Perrin, Dos Santos, Fernandao, Olembe and company, Marseille have started a new life in the French Riviera supported by sixty thousand fans every two weeks in the Veldrome Stadium. A bright new football.

The result speaks for itself as they take the title of Winter Champion. They know their run may not yet be finished - they have come so far and hope to be in the top three at the end of the season. Well done, Marseille! Your supporters are singing again and it was not the easiest climb to the top.

Congratulations as well to Niza and Guingamp who are sitting together in first and fourth spot only one point behind Marseille and trailing only two points behind second are Lyon, Sochaux and Monaco.

The youngest team of League One, Sochaux is at the top and just ahead of Auxerre who have two games still to play.

Four teams are in big trouble amongst the rest of the bunch - Montpellier, Troyes, Ajaccio and Le Havre. All are on the bottom of the table and already four points behind the non-relegation zone. In January, these teams are going to have to compete to survive in League One with three teams to be relegated.

In the middle of the table we have Paris-Saint-Germain, Bordeaux, Nantes, Strasbourg and Lens trying to reach the top of the league but with six points behind, a good start in January is vital if they don't want to achieve any kind of results.

This week, Zidane was nominated by the players in France for Player of the Year ahead of Henry and Makelele.

Rennes, Lille, Sedan and Bastia need to gain forty-two points as soon as possible to secure a definite spot next year in League One and it's quite possible after their performance this weekend. All are go on leave with very good results.

Half way through League Two sees Le Mans, Toulouse and Metz in the top three but it's still a long way to the finish - that's what makes this league very tough and interesting. A favourite in this competition, Saint-Etienne is the only disappointment as they sit in the very poor position of fourteenth place.

Finally, congratulations to Ronaldo who scored the top honour of France Football's Best Player in Europe 2002 though there were other deserving players who also had a great year.

Top countries France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, England, Russia, Belgium, Holland, Brazil, Argentina and Spain voted for Roberto Carlos who finished in the number two spot as smaller countries like Estonia, Luxembourg, and Andorra voted for Ronaldo.

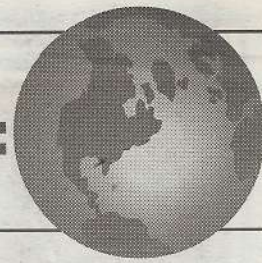
The unofficial winner for most of us is Roberto Carlos though Ronaldo is definitely the champion for Best Comeback of the Year and FIFA Player of the Year for his World Cup performance as top scorer.

No doubt he is a great player and is loved by all but this award should have gone to Roberto Carlos who is in the heart of everybody as European Player of the Year.

But last week, Zidane performance against Valencia have prove that he is the world best player.

To everyone happy new year.

See you next week.



WORTHINGTON CUP FINAL

Blades Cut Down Liverpool

Michael Tonge scored twice in the second half to give First Division Sheffield United a 2-1 win over Liverpool in the first leg of their Worthington Cup semi-final at Bramall Lane.

Tonge found the back of the net twice in the space of six minutes to give Sheffield United the advantage going in to the second leg at Anfield in a fortnight's time.

The midfielder, a reported transfer target for Gerard Houllier, brought his side level in the 76th minute when he drove the ball between Chris Kirkland's legs after good work from Stuart McCall.

He then gave Neil Warnock's



Sheffield's Michael Tonge shown scoring the winning goal against Liverpool in the Worthington Cup.

men a precious winner with a fine finish from 18 yards after the visitors had failed to deal with a Wayne Quinn corner.

Liverpool led at half-time thanks to Neil Mellor's first senior goal for the club but despite both Michael Owen and Emile Heskey entering the fray after the break, they had no response to Tonge's double strike.

Australian international defender Shaun Murphy played a full game for The Baldes and pushed his claims for selection in the Socceroos squad for the February 12 friendly against England at Upton Park with a rock solid performance.

ROVERS DENY MAN U

Manchester United was held to a 1-1 draw by Blackburn Rovers in the first leg of their Worthington Cup semi-final at Old Trafford.

A Paul Scholes goal in the 58th minute put the home side ahead but the defending champions grabbed a crucial away goal just three minutes later when David Thompson headed home.

Blackburn go in to the second leg at Ewood Park in a fortnight's time with the upper hand although Sir Alex Ferguson's men can never be discounted.

The opening half had done little to warm up the crowd on a freezing night in Manchester, with the best chance falling to Ruud van Nistelrooy on the stroke of half-time, when he shot straight at Brad

Friedel from the edge of the Rovers' 18-yard box.

But the game livened up when Scholes broke the deadlock.

He capped a brisk United move when David Beckham's low ball to the far post was met by Friedel's dive, but the American goalkeeper succeeded only in pushing it on to the boot of Scholes and into the back of the net from close range.

However, Graeme Souness' side responded quickly in the best possible style, when Keith Gillespie's cross picked out the unmarked Thompson ten yards out, and the former Liverpool and Coventry midfielder made no mistake with a firm header past fabien Barthez.

Both sides battled for a deciding goal in the final third of the game

and United came closest to winning it in stoppage time.

Substitute Ole Gunnar Solskjaer found space inside the Blackburn penalty area and after he curled the ball past Friedel from eight yards, 17-year-old James McEveley made a brilliant goal-line block with his chest, to deny the Norwegian and earn his side a deserved draw.

Just minutes earlier, Australian defender Lucas Neill thought he had won a penalty for Rovers after going down in the box under the challenge of Mikael Silvestre.

However, referee Uriah Rennie saw the incident differently and yellow carded Neill for a dive although replays showed that Silvestre had shoved the Socceroos hopeful.

ALL QUIET ON THE TRANSFER FRONT

A week since the midwinter transfer window opened and purses remain snapped shut across Europe.

So far loan deals are the predominant currency. Glenn Roeder, manager of the English Premiership's bottom club West Ham United, summed up the mood of caution when he said: "The money is not available so we are all in the same boat and the ones that want to do business like we do have to take players on loans or short-term contracts with no transfer fee."

Roeder has just concluded the transfer of English international Lee Bowyer on a six-month contract from Leeds United.

Another club reinforcing in a similar way are newly promoted Birmingham City, whose manager Steve Bruce has already secured loan deals for former French international Christophe Dugary from Bordeaux and Lens's Senegalese international Ferdinand Coly.

Bruce is also close to signing Tottenham Hotspur's Stephen Clemence and Ipswich Town's Jamie Clapham, while Manchester City - who have already acquired

Marseille's Djamel Belmadi on loan - are now trying to tempt Barcelona's Michael Reiziger to Maine Road.

So far the Premiership's big guns remain silent yet Manchester United are reportedly interested in signing Sunderland striker David Bellion, while rumour in France has it their title rivals Arsenal may look to Ligue 1 for a goalkeeper.

AS Roma are shaping up to be the biggest spenders in Serie A. Leeds's French international midfielder player Olivier Lacourt should soon complete a loan move to the Italian capital, with the transfer becoming permanent in the summer.

Roma are also chasing Chievo Verona defender Nicola Le Grottaglie but will not move for Real Madrid striker Fernando Morientes unless Gabriel Batistuta secures a move away from the Eternal City.

Staying in Italy, Parma are after Chievo midfielder player Simone Perrotta, whose arrival would free the way for Sabri Lamouchi to join Juventus.

Emanuele Blasi may also be Turin-bound: the Perugia midfielder was due to join Juve in the summer but may move now in a swap with

Davide Baiocco. Perugia, meanwhile, could re-sign Fabio Liverani from Lazio in return for Roberto Baronio. AC Milan, likewise, may acquire Brazilian defender Cribari from Empoli, while loaning Italian Under-21 international Marco Borriello to the Carlo Castellani stadium. Attracting attention in Italy and Spain is the future of Madrid's Argentinian winger, Santiago Solari. Madrid want Inter to take Solari to cover the final 10m the Nerazzurri are owed for Ronaldo's transfer. However, Inter are also pursuing Chievo's Eriberio and Manchester United's Ryan Giggs.

Solari apart, there has been little grist to the rumour mill in Spain. Francisco Farinos is back in the Primera Division on loan at Villarreal, while Atlético Osasuna have spent close to 2m on the Uruguayan Richard Morales. Bottom club Recreativo de Huelva, meanwhile, may gamble on signing the experienced Italian full-back Moreno Torricelli.

In Germany, Hamburger have signed Japan striker Naohiro Takahara on a free transfer from J-League champions Jubilo Iwata.

As the 1.

Bundesliga's biggest club, Bayern Munich have considerably more spending power and have been linked with the 18-year-old Santos striker Robinho, although Barcelona could provide competition for the signature of the 25m-rated teenager. Elsewhere, VfL Bochum may move for Borussia Dortmund's Sunday Oliseh, Chinese international Shao Jiayi is bound for TSV 1860 Munich from Beijing Guoan and VfL Wolfsburg have signed Argentinian defender Pablo Javier Quatrocchi from C Estudiantes La Plata. Former Eintracht Frankfurt midfielder player Horst Heldt is heading back to Germany from Sturm Graz to join VfB Stuttgart.

France's Ligue 1 has seen only two major signings to date: Russian international striker Dmitri Sytchev's move to Marseille from Spartak Moscow and Auxerre's purchase of the young Ivorian striker Akale Kanga from FC Zurich.

The coming weeks could see some departures from AS Monaco, who may have to offload players to cut costs. They will not be the only ones.

Inzaghi's pledge to Milan

Italian international Filippo Inzaghi wants to remain at AC Milan for the rest of his career.

The talented forward has had a superb season for the Rossoneri so far. Inzaghi is the joint highest goalscorer in the Champions League, along with Inter Milan's Hernan Crespo, with nine goals.

He has also scored eight goals in Serie A, helping his club to the top of the table.

"If it is possible, I want to remain at Milan all my life," said Inzaghi on the club's official website, www.acmilan.it.

The 29-year-old joined AC Milan in the 2001-2002 season from Juventus and has a contract with the club until June, 2006.

His first season at the San Siro was less than glorious.

"Super Pippo", as he is nicknamed in the fashion capital, only made 22 appearances, scoring 10 goals. The Piacenza-born player was overshadowed by Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko, who was Carlo Ancelotti's preferred choice.

However, Inzaghi now feels at home and has no intention of leaving



Filippo Inzaghi: Hoping to stay at AC Milan for the rest of his career.

the Rossoneri club.

"Here I am in a family and I talk a lot with (president Adriano) Galliani," he added.

"It looks like I could finish my career here and then I could coach the youth teams, to show them the tricks of the trade."

Another accolade for Collina

Serie A official Pierluigi Collina has been named best referee in the world for the fifth consecutive time.

The award, given by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS), comes after a season in which Italian referees have been accused of bias against Serie A's lesser powers.

"It is satisfying for me because it is also a testimony to the good work done by Italian referees," Collina told Italian sports newspaper Gazzetta dello Sport.

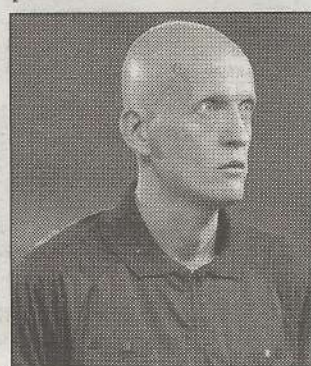
Collina's finest hour came when he was chosen to referee the World Cup final between Brazil and Germany at the International Stadium in Yokohama last summer.

"In the past only a few referees have had that privilege," added the

42-year-old.

"When you have the recognition you always have the responsibility to be at the standard required to what people expect."

"My secret? I always try to prepare to the



Pierluigi Collina: Named as the world's best referee for the fifth consecutive year.

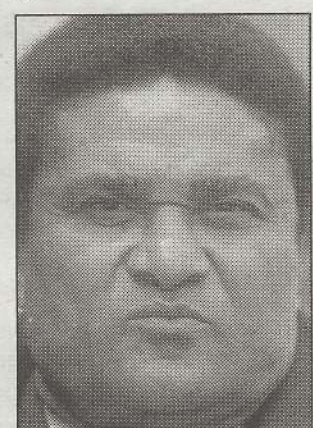
Eusebio, Figo And Viana Named As Euro 2004 Ambassadors

The organizers of the Euro 2004 championships in Portugal have unveiled Eusebio, Luis Figo and Hugo Viana as the tournament's first official ambassadors.

The selection was obviously made with the past, present and future of Portuguese football in mind, as Eusebio is recognized as one of the greatest strikers in footballing history, Real Madrid's Luis Figo needs no introduction, while Newcastle United's Hugo Viana is a star in the making.

Further ambassadors are set to be announced whose main function will be to draw publicity to

the grand tournament that will take place from June 12 to July 4.



Eusebio: Announced as Ambassador for Euro 2004.

Solari in talks with Inter

Santiago Solari's agent will meet with officials from Inter Milan this week to discuss the Argentinian's proposed move to the San Siro.

Real Madrid are keen to offload the 26-year-old to make up the balance of the deal that took Ronaldo to the Bernabeu.

"We are awaiting our first meeting with Inter Milan," Solari's agent Alejandro Carmano told PA International.

"That is set to take place at some point this week in order to resolve the player's transfer. Obviously the player is open to an agreement in order to find a solution."

Madrid still owe 10million euros (\$A18.2million) for Ronaldo, but Inter agreed at the time of the move that they would be willing to accept a player in lieu of payment.

"We have made our position clear, now we have to wait on the

conversations between the Italian club and the player," Real sporting director Jorge Valdano told the club's official website, www.realmadrid.com.

Solari is one of a number of highly-paid players who have been deemed surplus to requirements.



Santiago Solari: Generating interest from Inter Milan.



NATIONAL LEAGUE ACTION BETWEEN PARRAMATTA POWER VS ADELAIDE CITY FORCE



Photos by
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